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A BRIEF
VIEW OF GREEK PHILOSOPHY
FROM THE AGE OF SOCRATES
TO THE COMING OF
CHRIST.

44. 787.





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LONDON:
WILLIAM PICKERING.

1844.





CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

R.C.	OLYMP.	
471	LXXVII. 2	Birth of Thucydides the historian. Banishment of Themistocles.
470	——— 3	Birth of Socrates.
450	LXXXII. 3	Archelaus, the pupil of Anaxagoras, flourished.
449	——— 4	Death of Cimon.
445?	LXXXIII. 4?	Anaxagoras is banished for "impiety," being then aged about 55.
444	LXXXIV. 1	Thucydides the son of Melesias banished. Protagoras the sophist flourished about this time : also Empedocles.
440	LXXXV. 1	Comedies interdicted by law. The Samian war.
437	——— 4	The law prohibiting the representation of comedies repealed.
436	LXXXVI. 1	Revolt of Potidæa.
432	LXXXVII. 1	Beginning of the Peloponnesian war.
430	——— 3	Plague at Athens.
428	LXXXVIII. 1	Plato born.
425	——— 4	Cleon takes the command at Sphacteria. The Acharnians of Aristophanes represented at the Dionysia.
424	LXXXIX. 1	Battle of Delium where Socrates is said to have distinguished himself. Aristophanes' "Knights" represented.

B.C.	OLYMP.	
423	LXXXIX. 2	Aristophanes' " Clouds " represented.
422	——— 3	Aristophanes' " Wasps " represented. Brasidas and Cleon killed at Amphipolis.
416	XCI. 1	Diagoras the Melian, called also the atheist, is condemned to death for " impiety : " on his non-appearance at his trial, his sentence is published, and a talent offered for his head, or two talents to whoever should deliver him up alive. Agathon gains the prize of tragedy.
415	——— 2	Alcibiades is impeached for ridiculing the mysteries, and mutilating the statues of Mercury. He goes into voluntary banishment.
414	——— 3	Diogenes of Sinope born.
413	——— 4	The Athenians defeated at Syracuse.
412	XCII. 1	The rule of the 400 established at Athens. Protagoras prosecuted by one of them for " impiety "—his books burned, himself banished.
406	XCIII. 3	The battle of Arginusæ fought. The victorious commanders tried for not burying the bodies of the slain, and on this pretext, put to death. Socrates refused to do his office of president on this occasion, asserting that the proceeding was illegal. Sophocles died.
404	XCIV. 1	The Athenians defeated at Ægospotamos : Athens taken by Lysander : the rule of the thirty

B.C.	OLYMP.	
		established: the walls of Peiræum, which were built by Themistocles, destroyed by the Lacedæmonians. Alcibiades assassinated.
401	xciv. 4	The rule of the thirty overset by Thrasybulus, and the old government restored.
400	xcv. 1	Socrates put to death on the accusation of Anytus, Melitus, and Lycon.
396	xcvi. 1	Agésilæus king of Sparta successful in his attack on the Persians.
390	xcvii. 3	Rome burnt by the Gauls under Brennus.
388	xcviii. 1	Plato visits Sicily for the first time.
384	xcix. 1	Aristoteles born.
376	ci. 1	Pyrrhon, the head of the Sceptic sect, born.
371	cii. 2	Epameinondas, the Theban general defeats the Spartans at Leuctra.
368	ciii. 1	Aristoteles comes to Athens and enters the Academy. Eudoxus the astronomer flourished.
359	cv. 2	Philip of Macedon mounts the throne. Death of Xenophon.
348	cviii. 1	Death of Plato. Aristoteles leaves Athens and visits Hermeias, tyrant of Assus and Atarneus.
345	— 4	Aristoteles takes refuge in Mitylene after the capture and execution of Hermeias.
344	cix. 1	Timoleon delivers Syracuse from the tyranny of Dionysius the younger.
343	— 2	Aristoteles is invited to the court of Macedon to superintend the education of Alexander, who was then fifteen years of age.

B.C.	OLYMP.	
342	CIX. 3	Epicurus born.
340	CX. 1	Anaxarchus, an Abderite of the school of Democritus, flourished, he was the master of Pyrrhon.
339	— 2	Death of Speusippus. Xenocrates succeeds him in the Academy.
338	— 3	Battle of Cheronæa, where Philip broke the power of Greece.
336	CXI. 1	Philip of Macedon is assassinated.
335	— 2	Aristoteles comes to Athens, and opens a philosophical school in the Lyceum
334	— 3	Alexander begins his expedition into Asia.
324	CXIV. 1	Death of Alexander. Death of Diogenes of Sinope aged 90. He is succeeded by Crates.
323	— 2	Aristoteles, to avoid a prosecution for impiety, flies to Chalcis. Epicurus aged 18 comes to Athens from Samos, where he was educated.
322	— 3	Death of Aristoteles at Chalcis aged 63. Epicurus quits Athens and joins his father at Colophon.
318	CXV. 3	Demetrius Phalereus, a Peripatetic, made governor of Athens by Cassander.
316	CXVI. 1	Arcesilaus born.
315	— 2	Death of Xenocrates, Polemon succeeds him in the Academy. Stilpo flourished.
		Zeno of Cittieum, founds the Sect of the Stoics.
308	CXVIII. 1	Athens restored to its freedom by Demetrius Poliorcetes. Heeren.
307	— 2	Epicurus establishes himself as a teacher at Athens.
301	CXIX. 4	Battle of Ipsus, in which Antigo-

B.C.	OLYMP.	
		nus, the father of Demetrius, is defeated and killed, and his possessions divided amongst the conquerors. Demetrius flies to Greece, but is denied refuge by the Athenians.
97	CXX. 4	Demetrius again obtains possession of Athens.
294	CXXI. 3	Demetrius is placed on the throne of Macedon by the army.
288	CXXIII. 1	Death of Theophrastus, aged 85 : Strato succeeds him at the Lyceum.
287	— 2	Athens throws off the yoke, and resumes its ancient government : Demetrius, though driven from his throne, nevertheless invests the town, but at the persuasion of Crates yields to their wishes. He passes the rest of his life in exile with his father-in-law, Seleucus. <i>Heeren.</i>
284	CXXIV. 1	The Ætolian league formed for defence, against the oppression of Macedon : accession of Ptolemy II. called Philadelphus.
281	— 4	The Achaian league renewed by four cities which had freed themselves from their tyrants.
278	CXXV. 3	Irruption of the Gauls into Greece, under another Brennus. They take Delphi. Sosthenes, king of Macedon, is slain in battle with them. Antigonus Gonatas, the son of Demetrius, takes advantage of the opportunity to seat himself on the throne of his father. Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, drives him thence for a time,

B.C.	OLYMP.	
		but after the death of that monarch, he again obtains the kingdom.
275	CXXVI. 2	Pyrrhus defeated by the Romans, after considerable successes in his invasion of Italy.
272	CXXVII. 1	Pyrrhus killed in his attack upon Sparta.
271	— 2	Death of Epicurus, aged 72. Death of Strato Lampsacenus, the Peripatetic. He is succeeded by Lycon.
264	CXXIX. 1	Death of Zeno of Cittieum, founder of the Stoic sect, aged 98?
260	CXXX. 1	Victory of the Roman Duilius over the Carthaginians by sea.
251	CXXXII. 2	Sicyon, under its deliverer Aratus, joins the Achaian league.
244	CXXXIV. 1	Attempt of Agis, king of Sparta, to restore the ancient laws of Lycurgus.
243	— 2	Corinth and Megara join the Achaian league.
242	— 3	Death of Antigonus Gonatas.
241	— 4	Death of Arcesilaus, aged 75. Agis, king of Sparta, his grandmother and mother put to death.
229	CXXXVII. 4	Athens joins the Achaian league. <i>Heeren.</i>
226	CXXXVIII. 3	Cleomenes, king of Sparta, carries out the designs of Agis.
216	CXLI. 2	Death of Lacydes, the successor of Arcesilaus in the Academy.
214	— 3	Carneades born.
211	CXLII. 2	Alliance of Rome with the Ætolians, in which Sparta, Elis, Attalus of Pergamus, and Skerdilaidas, and Pleuratus of Illyria join: finally also the Athenians and Rhodians.

B.C.	OLYMP.	
203	CXLIV. 2	Philip of Macedon makes war on Attalus, the ally of Rome.
200	CXLV. 1	Rome declares war on Philip.
197	—— 4	T. Quinctius Flaminius terminates the war with Macedon by the victory of Cynoscephalæ.
196	CXLVI. 1	Greece restored to its freedom by Flaminius.
188	CXLVIII. 1?	Philopoemen compels the Lacedæmonians to demolish their walls and abrogate the laws of Lycurgus.
183	CXLIX. 2	Death of Philopoemen, the general of the Achaian league
168	CLIII. 1	The battle of Pydna, which subjects the Macedonian kingdom to Rome.
166	—— 3	Perseus, the last king of Macedon, dies at Rome.
155	CLVI. 2?	Carneades is sent to Rome on a mission from Athens, in company with Diogenes the Stoic, and Critolaus the Peripatetic.
146	CLVIII. 3	The Achaians declare war against Sparta and Rome, upon which being worsted, Achaia is declared a Roman province. A nominal freedom is left to Athens, and some other considerable cities.
129	CLXII. 4	Death of Carneades, aged 85.
87	CLXXXIII. 2	Athens taken and ruined by Sylla, 1 March. <i>Heeren</i> .
80	CLXXV. 1	The Academy ends with Antiochus Ascalonita.
63	CLXXXIX. 2	Marcus Tullius Cicero, consul.



I.

STATE OF ATHENS—SOCRATES.

B.C. 470 TO B.C. 400.

THE former part of this little work exhibited the fortunes of Greece and its civilization, from its first dawnings in the ancient kingdoms of Sicyon and Argos, up to its meridian of splendour under the great men who maintained the liberties of their country against the mightiest empire then existing;—wrenched from the invader even more than he had won from them,—and bequeathed to the next generation the fame of their deeds, and the plunder of Persia for their inheritance. They were two dangerous gifts. Athens, rich, powerful, proud of her place in the van of Grecian combatants, which her great generals had won for their country, and presuming on the supremacy of the seas, which none could now contest with her, ruled her dependencies with no light hand; and Sparta, jealous of a greatness which it feared in its growing might, and hated for the oppo-

site political system which it every where supported, lent a ready ear to the complaints of Athenian oppression made by the discontented. Yet the great league for the humiliation of Athens, which united against her nearly all Greece in the Peloponnesian war, found the force which had humbled Persia no easy conquest, and nearly thirty years of almost single-handed conflict scarcely sufficed to undo the work of Themistocles, of Cimon, and of Pericles. Nay, when she did fall, it may be truly said, that it was not so much the might of her enemies, as the internal vices of the state, which broke her strength, and paralysed the exertions of that once high-minded people.

In the earlier part of the Grecian history, we have seen that the natural respect for superior knowledge had generally given to the philosopher the task of legislating for his countrymen ; but the decree of the Athenian people, procured by Diopeithes about sixteen years before the commencement of the Peloponnesian war, by which any attempt to innovate on the existing popular superstition was made a capital offence,* was the commencement of a new epoch. It will

* See Plutarch. vit. Peric.

be desirable before entering upon it to take a slight view of the previous state of Athens.

The fundamental principle of the Athenian constitution, as settled by Solon, appears to have been that of resting the government of the state in those who had a sufficient stake in it to make it their interest to preserve peace and good order; and as the minimum property qualification for political office was not more than would now be equal to about forty or fifty pounds per annum, of freehold property, and the fourth class, or Thetes, who were excluded from office, were nevertheless allowed to serve on juries,† and vote at elections; the state, even by his code, must have made as near an approach to a pure democracy as was consistent, probably, with a due administration of the laws. Solon, appears, indeed, to have intended to set up an antagonist power in the court of Areopagus, consisting of those who had held the highest offices of the state; and to have guarded against the precipitation of popular movements by the various forms appointed to be gone through

† I use this term as approaching the nearest to a description of the office filled by the dicast. These juries, however, consisted of many hundreds.

in the Council or Senate, before a law was presented to the assembly of the people for its final confirmation or rejection ; but still there is no modern government which is so completely popular. Perhaps we have a nearer approach to the Athenian constitution, in the municipal government of the city of London, than in any other existing institution : the Livery, Common Council, and Court of Aldermen, representing tolerably well, the Assembly of the People, Senate, and Court of Areopagus, of Athens.

Before Solon undertook the reform of the laws, considerable oppression must have been exercised, for the very prohibitions shew the practices that had existed. Bondage was abolished ; and no man was allowed to pledge his own body as security for a debt, or to sell his children or other relatives : mortgages and debts which were become ruinous from the excessive rate of interest, were reduced by some equitable arrangement, which cleared the land of its burthens, or were rendered less onerous by a reduction of the rate ; and a provision was made for such as should be mutilated in war, or otherwise incapacitated from maintaining themselves. In order to claim this latter provision, however, it was needful to prove, that the whole property

of the claimant did not amount to more than the worth of three minas, or about twelve pounds sterling ; which, calculating the price of articles of necessity at that period, was about equal to forty pounds in our own age and country.* All extreme indigence was in this manner avoided ; for the sum bestowed was sufficient to purchase a full supply of food daily ; and thus, those who had little or no property, had still an interest in the maintenance of good order, as their own well-being depended on it. Orphans, whose fathers had perished in war, were the charge of the state ; they were fed, clothed, and educated up to eighteen years of age, then provided with a complete suit of armour, and enrolled in the army. They were the especial children of their country, and as such bound to defend it.

Though bondage among the native Athenians had been abolished, slavery was still permitted : in those times it was so universal, that it would scarcely have been possible to have abolished it in one small state ; and though we may probably trace the downfall of all the republics of antiquity to that cause, yet the evil grew up so gradually, that it was difficult at its

* Boeckh. Public Econ. of Athens, Bk. ii. c. 17.

commencement to anticipate the fearful magnitude that it would arrive at. Probably, in Solon's time, the slave was but a workman to aid the citizen in cultivating his lands: but we generally see, that ere long, the distinction between the free man and the slave is placed in the exemption of the former from manual labour; and then idleness and dissipation, and all their demoralizing influences, follow. They did so at Athens to a frightful extent.

By the laws of Solon, the expenses of the religious festivals and sacrifices were limited; but this part of the code very soon became a dead letter; for, as the beasts offered were distributed among the poorer sort; those chiefs who wished to gain the popular favour, took this indirect mode of securing it. Splendid feasts, and immense sacrifices were made on all occasions by those who were rich, and wished to be powerful, until the people learned to consider this as an indispensable part of the administration of the state; and, from a private disbursement, it became a public one. Pericles has been accused of having been the first thus to apply the public money, and of having by these means, hastened the ruin of the country. The law of Diopithes, however, shews that his contemporaries sus-

pected him of an intention to make a considerable change in this respect; which in fact was made, during the zenith of his power, by the interdiction of the exhibition of comedies at the festival of the Dionysia. This law remained in force only three years, at the end of which time it was repealed, and comedies were again acted: it would seem, therefore, that he only yielded to a torrent which he was unable to stem. This great man seems to have entertained the splendid project of making Athens the head of the whole Grecian confederation; and, probably, he contemplated the introduction of a better system as soon as this should be accomplished: for the life of Anaxagoras seems to have been especially precious to him, on account of the aid he expected to derive from him in the administration of the state. This seems the more likely, because from the time he triumphed over his opponents, his biographer tells us, that he assumed a more authoritative manner; and seemed determined to rule, rather than to conciliate the people. Had he lived, it is likely that he might have accomplished his purpose; but his death left the moral plague of the state to be treated by unskilful hands, and the patient sunk into a state of incurable disease

The dicasts, or jurymen, appointed for the hearing of causes, were required by the laws of Solon, to give their services gratis ; unless, indeed, we may suppose the prytancia, or small deposits, paid into court by each party on commencing an action, were distributed among the dicasts from the first. When, therefore, the jurisdiction of Athens became extended, and the whole of her dependencies were compelled to bring their suits to her courts, this duty became onerous ; and in the time of Pericles, the custom was introduced of paying one obolus, per cause, to each of the dicasts, as a small remuneration for the time thus consumed ; which, as they were mostly artisans and people of small means, they could not afford to waste. But the custom being once introduced, it became the means of gaining popular favour at a cheap rate in the hands of subsequent demagogues ; and the pay was augmented from one obolus to three, as most think, by Cleon. As the dicasts employed in one cause amounted to some hundreds,* this soon became a source of mainte-

* The ten courts at Athens required five hundred dicasts each ; thus five thousand citizens received daily pay, excepting on holidays, which perhaps amounted to about sixty days in the year.

nance to many, and there was thus a strong inducement to lengthen out causes, to the great inconvenience of suitors from a distance, who then had recourse to bribes, to induce the needy dicasts to make a speedy decision, and allow them to return to their homes. This was undoubtedly one of the causes that hastened the downfall of Athens, for it created universal discontent among the states subject to her, and as universal a political corruption among her citizens.

The condition in which the laws of Solon placed the female sex was not favourable to morality. Though by his code, their sale was forbidden, excepting in cases of gross misbehaviour; yet the permitted sale on these occasions, at once put them on the footing of slaves; and the numerous burthensome regulations which their movements were subjected to, with the view, it would seem, of *compelling* an unremitting attention to domestic affairs, prevented any of that intercourse with the external world, which would enlarge the mind, and make the wife or the mother an object of respect to the husband or the son. Ignorance and narrow mindedness, are an ill soil for any graceful virtue to grow up in; and, however much Aristophanes may

have libelled his countrywomen, we cannot avoid confessing, that a state in which such libels could be listened to patiently, must have arrived at a fearful point of licentiousness, as far as regarded the manners of the male sex, if not also of the female.

The consequences of unintentional oversights, and intentional party measures in modern legislation, can hardly be judged of by those whose minds are still heated by the political contests they have been engaged in: it is instructive, therefore, to contemplate the primary causes of failure in legislative enactments, at a distance of time that may allow us to judge of them calmly. In the course of a century, Solón's laws were become almost nugatory, and we can now see that his code carried the seeds of its own decay. It permitted slavery;—and hardy industry soon gave place to idleness and profligacy:—it withheld the truth from the people, and countenanced a false superstition;—and this was soon made the tool of faction; and religion, instead of a guide to the heart, became a calculation of interest, or an excuse for profligacy:—it found and left women in a state of slavery;—and such a frightful demoralization and degradation of the other sex ensued, that

no modern writer can even touch upon the subject without disgusting his readers.

Such was the state of Athens, when the great man, who amid such wide spread corruption still maintained his integrity, was snatched from his post by the plague which desolated the city about the end of the eighty-seventh Olympiad. We have traced with admiring eyes the hitherto glorious career of this small state; we shall now have to follow its decline, and with it, that of its rivals: for, as Athens had marched in the vaward of Grecian civilization and greatness, so her downfall was followed, in no long time after, by that of her short-sighted enemies. Sixty years after the long walls, planned by Themistocles, and built by Pericles, had been pulled down by the Spartans, the decisive battle of Cheronæa laid the liberties of all Greece at the feet of Philip of Macedon. Sparta, which had but its iron men to recommend it, sunk into irrecoverable ruin,—the late, but unfailing retribution for the national sin of Helotism:—but Athens, though its political existence was lost, still kept its place as the seat of art and science, its schools supplied a preceptor for the conqueror of Persia, and even as late as the time of Cicero, foreigners travelled thither to study philosophy.

The buoyancy of the human mind is not easily crushed, and though Anaxagoras died in banishment, this did not prevent ARCHELAUS from filling his chair at Athens; but made cautious by the fate of his master, he confined himself mainly to physics, taught the easy doctrine, that nothing was right or wrong *per se*, but became either the one or the other by the law of the state,* and by dexterously trimming his course to the times, escaped the danger of offending the people.

About this time, Criton, a rich Athenian, was one day passing the small workshop of a sculptor, where a young man was busily employed at his trade: he had seen this youth before, listening with eager attention to the philosophical lectures of Anaxagoras and Archelaus, and he entered into conversation with him; for it was something unusual, even in Athens, to see the laborious earnings of a young and unknown artist devoted merely to the pursuit of philosophy. Criton was charmed with the talent, as well as modesty of the young student; and, with a generosity which at that time, pro-

* Diog. Laert. lib. ii. § 16, 17.

bably, he little thought would immortalize his name, bestowed on the intelligent youth the means of pursuing his studies without need for farther manual labour.* The name of this youth was SOCRATES.

Athens was then in the zenith of her power, yet whoever watched the state of society, could hardly fail to observe in it the seeds of dissolution. The enlightened Pericles had failed in his endeavours to set a higher standard of religion and morals; and his wise and excellent preceptor had suffered the penalty of preaching the truth too boldly. The grossness of the public exhibitions, and the licence of convivial meetings were such, that the great and virtuous man who held the reins of government would never countenance them by his presence; and yet this, instead of discouraging the practice, only excited the vengeance of the comedians and debauchees of the city. Pericles was made the mark for insult and calumny, but vice walked abroad as unblushingly as ever.

It is easy to conceive what must have been the impression made by such a state of things on a young and earnest mind, which had drunk

* Diog. Laert. lib. ii. § 20.

in, as its first milk of knowledge, the sublime doctrines of Anaxagoras. Socrates caught up the mantle of the prophet, like another Elisha, and vowed himself to the improvement of his fellow men. In the gymnasia, in the agora, in the workshops of the citizens, he was constantly to be found, mixing with the throng, detecting and reprobating vice, and teaching men, by pertinent and searching questions, the folly, as well as the immorality of their conduct. His skill in disputation was soon exercised by a set of men, who about this time sprang up, under the title of Sophists; persons who professed to be acquainted with the whole round of science, and capable of imparting this knowledge for a large sum of money.* Philosophy was the fashion, and, among the young nobility, these teachers found numerous pupils, who learned from them that species of reasoning which to this day is called sophistry, and with it a morality so loose and large that immorality would be a more proper term for it. The ichneumon is not a greater

* Protagoras of Abdera, said to be the first who received money for his instructions, charged an hundred minas, or upwards of £400 of our money, for the complete education of a pupil. See Boeckh's Public Economy of Athens, Book i. ch. 21.

enemy to a serpent, than Socrates was to a sophist: he foiled them with their own subtleties of speech, and detected the fallacies of their argument by a series of close reasoning which nothing but truth can endure. The noble youth of Athens enjoyed this war of wits, and followed the steps of the moralist more for the sake of amusement than profit; but they followed; and Socrates, if he could not win them to virtue, at least taught them to respect it.*

It is not now possible to tell exactly what were the political views of the philosophical party in Athens. That there was such a party, formed as early as the time of Pericles and Anaxagoras, can hardly be doubted; and subsequent events lead to the conjecture that the abolition, or at least, modification of the democratical power, was one of its objects; a design which, though distasteful enough to the people, might certainly be entertained at that period by a true patriot, as the only means of preventing the ruin of the state, and with it, of Greece generally, and almost of mankind; whose higher destinies seemed at that time cradled in that small nook of earth. Socrates appears to have

* See Xenoph. Memor. lib. i. c. 2. § 24.

formed a hope,—not unnatural in one who felt his own great powers and upright intentions,—that he might so far influence the young men who crowded round him, as to prepare a happier future for his country and for Greece. Alcibiades, whose talents and rank pointed him out as a fit successor to his uncle Pericles, was the object of his first attention :* he followed him in the crowd ; sought his confidence, and succeeded so far as to win the esteem and affection of that most versatile and profligate of all the Athenians ; but he could get no farther, and he seems to have turned in despair from him, to others more likely to fulfil his wishes.

Xenophon, the future leader of the ten thousand in their perilous retreat, was the next whom he cast his spell upon. Meeting him in a narrow way, he stopped his progress with his staff ; and after asking him some few questions of less import, inquired of him where and how good

* The profligacy of the age, which could not even believe in virtue, assigned a less pure motive to the attention of the philosopher ; but the unvarying testimony of his pupils, and of Alcibiades himself to the virtue and self-denial of this excellent man, leave it only to be regretted that any modern writer should think such calumnies worth repeating.

and upright men might be found. It was a puzzling demand in Athens at that time, and the young man hesitated. "Come then," said Socrates, "and learn."*—He did so, and to him it is that we owe the lovely portraiture of the life and conversation of the master whom he never afterwards forsook. But the talent and worth which Socrates had so anxiously cherished for his country's benefit, was never used in its service. Xenophon too was banished, for a supposed leaning to the policy of Sparta. He also, had probably adopted the political views of the philosophical party.

The last on whom Socrates seems to have founded his hopes, was the younger Pericles; the son of the gifted Aspasia. Xenophon has left us a touching account of an interview between the young warrior, just appointed to command, and the now aged philosopher, who still, with all the buoyancy of youthful hope, endeavoured to inspire his pupil with the spirit of his great parent.† He found an apt scholar, and

* Diog. Laert. lib. ii. § 48.

† Xenoph. Memor. lib. iii. c. 4. The elder Pericles lost both his sons by his first marriage, in the great plague, at the beginning of the Peloponnesian war. His son, by his second marriage with Aspasia, was legiti-

the victory of Arginusæ, where he was one of the commanders, threw a final lustre over the last scion of a race identified with the glory of Athens.* But the son of Pericles, and the disciple of Socrates, now a victorious general, was too dangerous to the demagogues of Athens to be allowed to live: the conquering chiefs were recalled,—accused upon frivolous grounds,—and the assembly of the people excited against him by the basest arts: no defence was listened to, the forms of law were broken through, and he, and such of his colleagues as returned with him, were condemned to death. On that day Socrates was one of the presidents of the senate, whose duty it was to put the question to the assembly; and in the face of that incensed multitude, edged on by their leaders, and howling like wild beasts for their prey; a scene, as Xe-

matized by the gratitude of the people of Athens, though the mother was not a citizen of that state.

* Pericles, the elder, was the son of Xanthippus, who commanded at Mycale; and his mother was the niece of Cleisthenes, by whom the tyrant Hippias was driven from Athens. Alcibiades was the son of his brother: the victorious commander at Arginusæ was the last of the family, apparently, if we except a son of Alcibiades made memorable only by a pleading of Isocrates on his behalf.

nophon describes it, which might have appalled the bravest ;—the only bold man in Athens stood up, faced their fury, and refused to put a decree in writing which was contrary to law,* or to countenance the condemnation of innocent men : but he stood alone, none had courage to second his righteous determination, and the victors of Arginusæ were sacrificed to the popular madness. That fearful night, when one scream of lamentation ran from Peiræus to the city, after the fatal defeat of Ægos-potamos, when no eye in Athens closed to sleep,—well revenged them on their murderers :—the last hope of the state sunk in those bloody waves, and the rule of the thirty tyrants followed the surrender of the city to the Lacedæmonians.

The tyrannous proceedings of these men soon excited the animadversions of Socrates ; and Critias, one of the number, who had formerly been among his disciples ; and who had been roughly reproved by him for his vices, sent for his old teacher, and enjoined him silence. Finding him unyielding on this point, another plan was tried ; and he was commanded, with three others, to seize Leon of Salamis,—a man whose

* Xenoph. Hist. Gr. lib. i. Memor. l. i. c. 18.

only crime was his coveted wealth,—and to conduct him to death. It was hoped thus to make the philosopher a sharer in the crime, and to disgrace him in the eyes of the people ; but that fearless moralist heard the order with silent contempt, and instead of executing it, retired to his house.* Still, amid all their crimes, the former disciples of the sage could not resolve on ridding themselves of his remonstrances by the hand of the executioner, and he survived their rule. But the presence of a man whose integrity neither fear nor interest could warp, was beginning to be irksome in a corrupt city ; and scarcely was the ancient government restored, before an accusation was preferred against him under the law of Diopeithes, for introducing new gods, and for corrupting the youth of the city.†

Socrates was now verging on seventy, and his life had not been such as to make death an evil to him ; his resolution therefore was quickly taken : it was a part of duty to submit to the laws, therefore he came into court and pleaded ; but he disdained any of the mean arts usual on such occasions : instead of seeking to excite the compassion of the judges, he reminded them of

* Plato. Apol. Soc. † Diog. Laert. lib. ii. § 40.

his own virtuous life, in which none of the duties of a citizen had been neglected. He was accused of being a corrupter of youth ;—he appealed to the Pythian oracle, which had pronounced him the wisest, the freest, and the most upright of men ; and then doing himself a justice which the occasion demanded, he continued, “ Whom have you ever known less in bondage to the pleasures of sense ? whom more free ? since I have taken neither gift nor reward from any. Whom would you consider more upright than one who satisfies himself with what he has, without wishing or asking for any thing from others ? or wiser than one who, from the time he could understand what was said to him, has never ceased to seek and to learn what was good and right to do ? And that I did not labour in vain, the esteem of all good men, whether at home or abroad, has shown.” With a noble confidence he called upon his accusers to show the youth whose piety, or whose morals he had injured. — “ But,” said the persecutor, “ you have taught them to listen to you, rather than to their parents.”—“ When I was more able to teach them what was right and good, I confess it,” replied the sage ;—“ you trust your son to the physician’s care, rather than your

own, when he is sick." *—Plato, then young, and an ardent admirer of his great master, whom, when old himself, he still professed to consider as the best and the wisest of men,—attempted to speak in his justification; but he was under the age at which citizens were permitted to address the people, and he was silenced.† On taking the votes, Socrates was condemned by 281 against 275: it remained only to assign the sentence. Criton and Plato tried to commute it for a considerable fine, which they were ready to pay, in order to preserve their beloved friend; but the democratic party, joined with those incited by private pique, carried the original proposition; and the greatest man Athens ever produced, was condemned to death. He heard his sentence with the calmness that might be expected from his character and left the court with these remarkable words:—"An unjust sentence is no dishonour to me; on those who have pronounced it falls the shame; for I know well that all future time will testify, as the past has done, that no one ever suffered injustice from me; that no one was a worse man through my agency; but that it was always

* Xenoph. Soc. Def. † Diog. Laert. lib. ii. § 40.

my endeavour, without fee or reward, to benefit all who conversed with me, and to make them wiser and better men." Having thus spoken, he left the court with a cheerful countenance, gently chiding his weeping friends for their sorrow.

It would be a pleasant task to trace more at large the life and death of a man, whose long and bright career seems to have been marked by less of human frailty than is usually found, even among those whom we call the best; and who, in disinterested exertion for the good of his fellow creatures, regardless of personal safety, yields only to that ONE with whom no mortal can be placed in competition. But the limits of this small work forbid the attempt.

It would be vain to trace the philosophical system of Socrates: he had none but such as springs naturally from a belief in a superintending Providence, and a future state;—a faith which leads equally to humility and to virtue; and whilst others admired his wisdom, he professed that it consisted merely in being aware that he knew nothing. Like Anaxagoras, he lived for another world;* and in another world

* When some one asked Anaxagoras if he felt no

he has doubtless found his reward. His life was his philosophy.

Various have been the opinions respecting the heavenly voice which Socrates, it is said, asserted to have been the guide of his actions : but if we may credit Plutarch, who makes Simmias, one of Socrates' most favoured companions, say, that he had asked his former teacher concerning it, and received no answer ;† and who doubtless reports the traditions handed down in other writers ; the mode of this intervention was quite unknown ; and it must remain a matter of doubt whether, when Socrates claimed the divine admonition from within, he intended to allude to any thing beyond that guidance which a soul purified by faith, prayer, and a temperate life, and cultivated by useful study, is wont to receive from its Creator. The commonest experience must have taught us that the image of God within us is a reflected one only, and the mirror that is kept the brightest and cleanest, will reflect it the best. He whose life and thoughts are modelled according to the pat-

anxiety to return to his country ; " Yes," said he, pointing to the skies, " to my real country." Diog. Laert. in vit. Anaxag.

† Plut. de Socratis dæmonio.

tern of the Deity, even though the imitation be but a distant one, acquires something of his foreknowledge also, for he sees the true consequences of actions; and many times will almost pass for a prophet with those whose minds have been less carefully trained. But even should we believe that the virtuous Socrates did indeed lay claim to a special divine guidance, why should we think a Greek unworthy of what was vouchsafed to a Hebrew? If the "Word of the Lord" came to Amos "among the herdsmen of Tekoa," why should the humble shop of the sculptor be unvisited, when a preacher of righteousness was to be raised up, whose voice should recall men to the path they had wandered from? A voice which, in fact, did echo from heart to heart, long after the mortal frame of the speaker had crumbled into dust. The acuteness, the integrity, the common sense, so apparent in the character of Socrates, equally forbid us to suppose him either an enthusiast or a deceiver: if, therefore, he claimed a divine mission, he did it not without good grounds; and who will say that he was unworthy to have received it?



DEMOCRITUS AND HIS SCHOOL.

B. C. 480 TO B. C. 404.

BEFORE entering on the examination of the different philosophical sects which had their origin among the pupils of Socrates, it will be necessary to notice another and contemporary school, that of DEMOCRITUS. This philosopher, who lived to the extraordinary age of 104, or, as some say, of 109 years, was a native of Abdera, a city of Thrace. He was a child when Xerxes passed the Hellespont, and made such large requisitions for the entertainment of himself and his army from the countries he traversed, that one of the citizens of Abdera is said to have observed, that "the Abderites ought to go in procession to the temples to thank the gods for not inclining Xerxes to eat twice a day, instead of once, for if they had been commanded to provide a dinner for him equal to his supper, they must have been reduced to utter beggary."*

* Herod. lib. vii.

The father of Democritus was noble and wealthy; and his entertainment of the Persian monarch was so liberal, that the king is said to have left him some of the Magian and Chaldean sages in his train, as preceptors for his young son.*

It was probably owing to this circumstance that the mind of Democritus was turned so strongly to philosophical pursuits. In order to acquire all the knowledge then to be found in the world, he travelled for many years, over all the countries which had the reputation of science. After spending his whole substance in this pursuit, he returned home, and lived in the most frugal manner, on the bounty of his brother; but nothing could deaden his thirst for knowledge; and in his humble dwelling, he still pursued his experiments in philosophy, and his researches into the nature of things. Once he visited Athens, and boasted that he had seen Socrates, though unknown to him,† and to the Athenians generally; for he seems to have shunned celebrity, as much as his friend and disciple Protagoras sought it. He is said to have derided the follies of men as much as Heraclitus had lamented them, and rarely to have appeared in public without laughing at what he heard and

* Diog. Laert. lib. ix. § 35.

† Ibid. § 36.

saw : and this is not surprising ; for as his time was almost wholly devoted to experimental philosophy, he must have found ample room for ridicule in the vulgar errors of his day upon such subjects. The moralist, Heracleitus, on the contrary, could have found no room for merriment in the licentiousness of his country.

As the writings of Democritus are lost, it is impossible to say what extent of knowledge his researches had acquired for him : the loss is the more to be regretted, as there is scarcely a subject in natural philosophy which he did not treat of ; and from his habits of careful experiment we may suppose that he did not assert lightly what he taught on such subjects. Somewhat of private pique at finding that Anaxagoras shunned his acquaintance, led him to treat the opinions of that philosopher with little respect : for he averred that the notion of the Ionian sage respecting the sun and moon, i. e. that of their solid, terrestrial nature, was not by any means his own, but stolen from the doctrine of the ancients on that subject ; and he “ pulled to pieces” also,—such is the expression of his biographer,*—the opinions of Anaxagoras respecting

* Diog. Laert. lib. ix. § 35.

the formation of things, and the creative mind. By the term (*διακόσμησις*) i. e. generation or government of things, he probably understood the *ὁμοιομέρειαι*, or exactly similar particles which went to the formation of each body, according to the system in question. The difference between the two philosophers on this point appears to have been, that Anaxagoras believed the particles to have no natural movement, and to be the mere clay in the hand of the potter,—the stuff which the Eternal Mind (*νοῦς*) moulded to his will by an immediate art:—Democritus, on the contrary, considered the atoms which he supposed the universe to be composed of, to have peculiar inherent qualities which form a part of their very nature; not of colour, smell, taste, heat, or cold, these being mere accidents resulting from a peculiar state or combination; but a disposition to a peculiar movement, by which these combinations were effected. In this, if our modern philosophy mistake not, Democritus was nearer right than his rival: for it is by the properties impressed on matter in the first instance, or in other words, by the forces thus brought into action, and not by immediate interference, that the hand of the Creator manifests itself. As far as modern discovery has gone,

we are obliged to acknowledge a considerable variety either in the elemental atoms themselves, or their properties: for oxygen of the same volume contains sixteen times the weight of hydrogen, and thus it becomes clear, either that the elemental atoms of which it is composed must be more dense, or the substance less elastic, or that the particles must exercise a less repulsive power, and thus be more numerous in a given space. Democritus having arrived at the point, that the coherence of the universe, and the phenomena of matter, might all be traced to the primary qualities of the elemental atoms, paused; "we know not the cause of this," said he, "the truth is hid very deep."* His early intercourse with the Magians, and his own subsequent researches, seem to have led him to lean to the notion, that as the sun's light and heat were the great agents in the combination and movement of the primary particles, so that some divine power resided in it, and that it might be considered as the soul of the world.†

* *αἰτία δὲ ἔδεν ἰδμεν, ἐν βυθῷ γὰρ ἡ ἀλήθεια.* Diog. Laert. lib. ix. § 72.

† See Cyril cont. Jul. lib. i,

The life and moral doctrines of Democritus were pure, and his death peaceful. He is said to have considered the great happiness of life to consist in the freedom from tormenting cares and fears, and superstitions ; the most blessed state being that of complete tranquillity. He has been called an atheist, so also was Anaxagoras, and so also were the first Christians ; we may conclude, therefore, that this term, in the language of the times, meant no more than that the person so distinguished, did not believe in the established superstitions.* Deeply engaged during his whole life in physical research, Democritus appears to have contented himself with leaving untouched the arcana which he could not penetrate. He was aware that there were great truths which he had not reached ; and we may probably, with more justice, call that humility, which his successors called atheism. He fulfilled his duties to the best of his power, and waited patiently for more light ; not deeming that he knew, and not hoping to know

* To this day, in Italy, all who doubt of the Romish *fables*,—not of the fundamental doctrines, on which the Romanist unites with all Christian churches,—are currently termed atheists.

those deep things, whose full profundity none ever feel so thoroughly as those who have pushed research to the utmost; and having done so,—having like Vishnu in the Hindù fable, burrowed in the earth, and soared in the air, and yet failed to find either the head or feet of the Creator, bow their wearied heads in the dust, and acknowledge the difference between the Finite and the Infinite.

Democritus had several disciples: among these, two of the most famous were his fellow citizen PROTAGORAS, and DIAGORAS, the Melian. The former is said to have been originally a wood cutter from a neighbouring village, whose clever mode of tying up his load attracted the attention of Democritus in one of his walks:* he undertook his instruction, and under his tuition, Protagoras acquired rhetoric and philosophy. The former wood carrier profited so well by his master's teaching, that he soon became famous, and was one of the first of the class already mentioned, on whom the title of sophist was bestowed, and who undertook, for a sum of money, to teach the whole round of

* Athen. l. viii. 50. The circumstance is mentioned also by Aulus Gellius.

science to whoever sought their instruction. Though the sketch which Plato has given us under his name must have owed much to the imagination of that most graphic of writers,—for when Protagoras visited Athens, the author of the dialogue was not yet born,—yet as doubtless the scene he gives was drawn from the life, it will be a relief from graver and drier matters, to take a view of the interior of a great man's house in Athens, where no less than three famous sophists were the guests. The scene is laid about the time when Athenian power was at its height, just before the Peloponnesian war; and when the banishment of Anaxagoras had made way for a very different style of philosophy. Socrates was then young, and he is, as usual, introduced by his clever disciple, as a sort of lay figure, to be dressed in the garb best suited to the occasion.

“Hippocrates, the son of Apollodorus,” says the pseudo relator, “came this morning before it was light, and knocked at my door with his stick: as soon as it was opened, he came strait to my room, crying, ‘Socrates, are you awake?’ and I, knowing his voice, replied: ‘Why, this is Hippocrates!—what is the matter?’—‘Nothing, or nothing but good.’—‘So much the

better ; but what is it ?—and why are you come now ?’—‘ Protagoras is arrived,’ said he, coming nearer. ‘ He has been here some time,’ said I, ‘ have you only just heard it ?’—‘ By the Gods ! not till last evening ;’—and, feeling about for my bed, he sate down at my feet, and said, ‘ Last evening coming back late from CEnoe, for my slave Satyrus had run away from me,—and certainly I should have told you that I was going after him, but something else put it out of my head ;—after I had got home, and we had supped, and were going to bed, my brother told me that Protagoras was arrived ; and then I was immediately coming to you, but I thought the night too far advanced ; and so, hastily taking the sleep which my fatigue required, I presently rose and came hither.’ I, knowing his warm temper, asked him if Protagoras had injured him in any way ? ‘ Yes, by the Gods, Socrates,’ replied he, laughing, ‘ for he chooses to keep all his learning to himself, and will not make me wise too.’—‘ By Jove,’ said I, ‘ if you persuade him by giving him plenty of money, he will be very ready to make you learned also.’ ‘ Oh Jupiter, and all the Gods ! if that were all,’ exclaimed he, ‘ I would not leave a penny in my own purse, or my friends’ either. And it is ex-

actly for this that I am come to you, that you might speak to him for me : for I am young, and I never saw Protagoras, or heard him speak. I was a child when he first came to Athens, but now I hear every body praising him, and talking of his skill in speaking. Why cannot we go to him now, when we shall be sure to find him at home ? He is staying, as I hear, with Callias, the son of Hipponicus. Let us go.—‘ By no means, my good friend,’ said I, ‘ it is too early : but we will go into the hall, and there we may walk and pass away the time till it is light, then we will go ; for Protagoras usually spends his time in doors, so that we may be tolerably sure of catching him within.’” Socrates is then made to question his friend as to what he proposes to learn from Protagoras. Hippocrates confesses that by going to a sophist for instruction he must learn to be a sophist himself. ‘ And, would you not be ashamed to be known to the Greeks as a sophist ?’ asks his friend. ‘ Why, by Jove, if I am to confess the truth, I think I should,’ replies the young man : however, an Athenian’s curiosity being excited by ‘ some new thing,’ must be gratified, and the friends depart for the residence of Callias ; but some difference of opinion having arisen in their con-

versation by the way, they walk up and down before the door till they have settled their dispute. "The porter, who is a eunuch," pursues the narrator, "I fancy heard us, and it seems that he had been put in an ill humour with all who approached the house, by the influx of sophists; for when we knocked at the door, he opened it a little way, and seeing us, exclaimed—'Oh, more sophists! He has no leisure to attend to you'—and taking the door with both his hands, he flung it to, with a hearty good will. We knocked again, and he, keeping the door shut, replied from within—'Have you not heard what I told you? He has no time to attend to you.' 'But,' said I, 'we do not want Callias, and we are not sophists; do not be alarmed, we are only come to call upon Protagoras: will you announce us?' But even then it was with difficulty that we persuaded him to open the door.

"When we entered, we found Protagoras walking in the front colonnade (*prostoa*), and with him were walking, on the one side, Callias, the son of Hipponicus, his half brother Paralus, the son of Pericles, and Charmides, the son of Glaucon: on the other side were Xanthippus, the other son of Pericles, Philippides, the son

of Philomelus, and Antimærus the Mendian, the most promising of Protagoras' disciples, who was learning his art in order to become a sophist himself. Behind them walked others who were listening to the conversation; these, for the most part, appeared to be strangers, who had followed Protagoras from the towns he passed through, caught by the sweet tone of his voice, as the beasts followed Orpheus: some, too, there were from the neighbourhood, who filled up the attending chorus. I was amused to see the admirable order observed by these listeners, and how careful they were never to advance beyond Protagoras; for as soon as he and his companions turned, they opened on each side in a half circle, to allow him to pass, and then again ranged themselves respectfully behind.

I next perceived, as Homer says, Hippias of Elis, enthroned in the opposite colonnade; and sitting below him upon the steps, Eryximachus, the son of Acumenos, and Phædrus, the Myrrhinusian, and Andron, the son of Androtion, and some strangers, fellow-citizens of Hippias, mixed with others. They seemed to be asking Hippias questions in physics and astronomy, and he, from his throne, replied, and explained

the things asked. There too I saw Tantalus,* that is to say, Prodicus of Ceos, who was also lately arrived. He was in a little room which had been formerly used as a storeroom by Hipponicus; but now, on account of the influx of strangers, Callias had emptied it, and given it up to their use. Prodicus was still in bed, smothered in skins and coverlets, as it seemed; and sitting beside him, was Pausanias of Cermis, and, beside Pausanias, a youth of particularly agreeable countenance, that seemed a great favourite of his. I thought I heard him called Agathon. There were besides, the two Adimanti, the one, the son of Cepis, and the other the son of Leucolophides, and some others. I could not hear the subject of their conversation, as I was outside, though I was most eager to hear Prodicus, as he appears to me to be a thoroughly learned and divine-minded man; but his voice being very deep, produced a sort of humming in the room, which hindered me from hearing distinctly what he said. We entered, and soon after us came the handsome Alcibiades, and Critias, the son of Callischros.

* In the original, some passages from Homer's description of the infernal regions are parodied.

“After we had been there a short time, and had contemplated the scene before us, we advanced towards Protagoras, and addressing him, I told him that Hippocrates and I were come to speak with him. ‘Do you wish to see me alone, or here among the rest?’ said he. ‘No matter, when I have told you our business, you will yourself judge what is proper.’” Socrates now explains Hippocrates’ wish to become his scholar, and then asks if he thinks proper to speak with him privately, or not: to which Protagoras replies, “You have judged right Socrates, regarding me; for a stranger travelling from one great city to another, and in each of them, persuading the youth of the highest rank to quit their friends and connexions, and attach themselves to him, only that they may become better by their intercourse with him; has need of caution: for he is sure to encounter no small hatred, as well as other discomforts and enmities. I, however, maintain that the sophist’s art is a very ancient one; but those who first exercised it, fearing the disagreeable consequences, endeavoured to hide it under various pretexts and disguises; some veiling it in poetry, as Homer, Hesiod, and Simonides; others giving it the character of initiations and

oracles, as Orpheus and Musæus : others have carried it on under the name of gymnastics, as Iccos of Tarentum, and as is still done by a sophist of our day, who yields to none in skill, I mean Herodicus the Selymbrian, whose ancestors were of Megara : your Agathocles too, an excellent sophist, made music his pretext, as did Pythoclides of Ceos, and many others. All these, as I have told you, fearing the envy they might encounter, concealed their profession under the veil of these arts : but I do not approve their plan, for I am of opinion, that they did not effect what they intended ; since it was quite impossible to conceal themselves from those in possession of authority, on whose account, nevertheless, these disguises were assumed : and as for the many, they, so to speak, know nothing, but raise a cry only when they are told to do so." He then goes on to claim for himself the merit of frankness in avowing boldly his profession, and offers to hear what they have to say in the presence of the whole party.

"I knew," continues the imaginary narrator, "that his object was to act a good figure before Prodicus and Hippias, by letting them see that we had quite fallen in love with him ; I there-

fore asked if we should not call them and their friends, to be present at the conversation. 'Certainly,' said Protagoras, and Callias inquired whether seats should not be prepared, that all might speak or hear at their ease. We all approved the motion, and set to work to carry chairs and benches to the side where Hippias was; because there were already some seats there. Meantime, Callias and Alcibiades came back, bringing with them Prodicus, whom they had induced to rise, and with him those who had been sitting in his room."

Protagoras, who throughout, is made to speak with considerable affectation of eloquence, now addresses himself to the young man, promising him, that under his instruction, he shall every day find that he has made some advance in knowledge. Socrates asks him, what sort of knowledge? Protagoras replies, with great politeness, that it is a very proper question, and that it is pleasant to him to answer such; and adds: "If Hippocrates follows me, he will not be wearied with the things which other sophists would compel him to learn. They, when they take a young man, how much soever he may shun the arts, lead him back to them in spite of himself, teaching him figures, and astronomy,

and geometry, and music—and whilst saying this, he cast a meaning glance on Hippias—while, if he follows me, he will learn nothing but what he comes to learn, for my instruction will only have for its object the guidance of his conduct both in public and private affairs.”—Farther questions are then put in the mouth of the imaginary narrator, by which the false moral system of the sophists is exposed: upon which, Protagoras is made to close the conversation with a compliment to Socrates on his clever management of the dispute, ‘which really augured considerable eminence in the art as he grew older,’ and a polite announcement that he had other business to attend to.

After this spirited sketch of the character of a sophist, little more need be said of Protagoras. His scepticism brought him at last into ill odour at Athens; and the books in which he asserted that there were no certain means of knowing whether there were gods or not, were condemned to be sought out from all those who possessed them, and burnt by the hands of the executioner. He himself was banished from the city, and required never again to set foot on Attic soil.*

* Diog. Laert. in vit. Protag. Brucker Hist. Crit. Phil. Pars ii. lib. ii. c. 11.

If, as some say, the accuser was one of the four hundred, this must have occurred B. C. 412.

DIAGORAS, the Melian, was likewise a pupil of Democritus, but not a sophist. He has been branded by all antiquity with the title of "the atheist," from his daring contempt of the superstition of his times. For this he was tried at Athens, and as he did not appear in order to defend himself, his sentence was engraved on a brass column; by this a talent, (about £240) was offered for his head, and two talents to whoever should take him alive, which implies an intention of adding torture to death.* This sentence was passed B. C. 416. The offences proved, appear to have been, the divulging the secrets of the mysteries; and on some occasion, when fire-wood was wanting, the using a statue of Hercules for that purpose, with the observation, that he would give the god a thirteenth labour, that of cooking the dinner for Diagoras.† What his real sentiments were, we have no means of judging but from his life, which, like that of his master, Democritus, appears to have been blameless. A writer who was better able to judge of this matter than we can now be,

* Brucker, Ib.

† Clem. Alex. Protrep. c. 2.

makes that the test of his belief, and it is probably a just one, "It is wonderful to me," says Clement of Alexandria, "how Euhemerus the Agrigentine, and Nicanor the Cyprian, and Diagoras, and Hippon the Melian, and that Cyrenian who came a little after them, Theodorus by name, and many others who led excellent lives, and were only clearer sighted than others as to the errors current regarding the gods, should have been called atheists. If they did not actually know the truth, they at least suspected the error, and kept alive the embers of that true knowledge which afterwards enlightened the earth."—We may reasonably conclude that the persons here referred to, would scarcely have exposed themselves to danger by a public exhibition of their contempt for the popular superstition, unless they had had some feeling of a higher and nobler truth, which they were eager to draw attention to; mere contempt would have smiled at the folly, and lived quietly in the midst of it. The law of Athens was not unknown; it was scarcely passed, ere Anaxagoras, no obscure man, was its victim, and escaped with his life only through the influence of Pericles, then so powerful in the state: it seems, therefore, hardly possible to avoid the

conclusion already drawn, that the philosophical party was a political one also, the leaders of which were pursuing,—too carelessly, perhaps, as regarded practicability,—an ideal state of perfection; and sacrificing themselves without regret to the promotion of this great object. Their followers, such as Alcibiades, Critias, Theramenes, and others, saw in the doctrines of the philosophical party, the means of advancing themselves,* and used the self sacrificing philosophers as their stepping stones to power and place. It may be observed in confirmation of this, that when Alcibiades was banished for his supposed profanation of the mysteries, and mutilation of the statues of Mercury,† his enemies “bellowed, that these arts struck at the very foundations of the democracy;”‡ for the subsistence of the lower classes of citizens was at this time so bound up with the existence of the superstition of the state, that the subverting the

* Xenophon expressly affirms this to have been the case. *Memoral. lib. i. c. 2.*

† They were blocks of stone rudely fashioned, and so little decent in their form, that Philip of Macedon's jest, in which he likened the Athenians to their own statues of Mercury, is too coarse to be here repeated.

‡ *Thucyd. lib. vi.*

one was supposed to be tantamount to the starving the other. As the Peloponnesian war advanced, the impoverishment of the citizens of course kept pace with its progress : and, in consequence, we find the proceedings against all "impiety," as it was called, were more and more virulent. The contest, although the philosophers were the sufferers, was in fact between the aristocratic party, or that of persons who thought their rank in the state gave them a right to govern it, and the democratic, or that of those who having the art of exciting the people, sought to bear rule by their means. This state of things is by no means obsolete.





III.

PLATO AND THE ACADEMY.

B. C. 389 ? TO B. C. 80.

THE death of their great master was the signal for the dispersion of all who had been known as the especial disciples of Socrates. Those who came from foreign countries returned to their homes, and those who were natives of Athens sought shelter either with them, or in more distant lands: PLATO, especially, betook himself to foreign travel as most preceding philosophers had done. After staying for a time with Euclides, at Megara, he proceeded to study geometry under Theodorus, at Cyrene: he then visited Egypt to learn astronomy, and from thence passed into Italy, where he sought to make himself acquainted with all that had been taught in the schools of Pythagoras.* He was preparing

* See Brucker's *Hist. Crit. Phil. Pars. II. lib. II. c. 4.*

likewise to visit India, but was deterred by the wars then carrying on in Asia. From Italy he crossed over into Sicily,* to view Mount Ætna, and there became acquainted with Dionysius the elder, the tyrant of Syracuse, by the intervention of Dion, whose sister this latter had married.

This young noble had eagerly sought the conversation of Plato, and believed, with all the ingenuousness of youth, that the tyrant would listen to the precepts of the philosopher; but when the pupil of Socrates began to explain the charms of virtue, and like Paul, to reason of righteousness, temperance, and it may be, also of a judgment to come,—for even this seems to have formed a part of the Socratean doctrine,—Dionysius could bear it no longer,—asked him what business he had in Sicily;—and not only dismissed him rudely from his presence, but bribed the master of the vessel in which the philosopher hastened to depart, either to put him to death on the passage, or to sell him for a slave. The seaman complied with the latter part of the behest, by carrying him to Ægina, the inhabitants of which were then

* Plutarch in vit. Dionis.

at variance with Athens, and enslaved any of her citizens who fell into their hands. He was, however, immediately redeemed by Anniceris, a philosopher of the Cyrenaic sect, who set him at liberty, and refused all repayment of the sum thus expended.

It is not very clear whether Plato had returned to Athens until now, for the course of study and of travels above mentioned, might very well have consumed twelve years, the period which had elapsed since the death of Socrates. Be that as it may, it is certain that he now, if not before, bought a small property; lying without the walls on the northwest, in the part called Cerameicus. This, though a low and unhealthy spot, he planted and beautified, and from the appellation of the neighbouring Gymnasium,—the Academy,—the school of philosophy which he established here was usually called the Academic. Here, with the exception of two voyages to Sicily made at the request of the younger Dionysius, he passed the remainder of his life, which closed peaceably at the age of eighty-one.

Plato's works are, or may be in the hands of every one,* it is, therefore, not necessary to

* A very elegant French translation, lately published

enter at so great length into his doctrines as from the influence they long had, and perhaps still have in the world, would otherwise have been requisite. One thing must be premised, to prevent his works from being misunderstood by those who may take them up for their own information. Socrates is made to take a large part in these most interesting dialogues, and with such consummate skill is the scene laid, and the actors introduced, that few would suspect that the great teacher of the Academy was only using the name of his old master as a convenient cloak for his own opinions. Doubtful how far the Athenian people might brook his doctrines, and mindful of the fate of Anaxagoras, of Diagoras, of Prodicus,* and of Socrates, he probably thought it expedient to appear to be merely reporting what he had heard. Socrates, justly or not, had paid the penalty of his imagined crime;—were Plato accused, he had but to say, ‘I am justifying your decree, for here are some of the heterodox opinions of my

by M. Cousin, places these most delightful writings within the reach even of those who cannot read the original.

* Prodicus is said to have been put to death in the same manner as Socrates. V. Suidas.

former master.' A small attention to chronology will make this apparent. The dialogue entitled *Protagoras*, so full of graphic detail, which has been already noticed, lays the scene at a period when the sons of Pericles were yet living. They died in the great plague 430 B.C. when Plato himself was not born. It is quite impossible that any interlocutor could have reported a conversation held thirty years before, with exactitude enough to enable him to give question and answer with such precision:—at best he must have worked up a general sketch by the aid of his own lively imagination; but it is more likely that he only made use of this mode of writing, by way of combating the known doctrines of Protagoras, and ridiculing generally the whole race of sophists. Another anachronism may be found in the *Menexenus*. Here Socrates is made to repeat a funeral oration which he professes to have heard from Aspasia; but this oration refers to circumstances which occurred fourteen years after the death of that philosopher. Probably the true state of the case was well known to Plato's contemporaries, and these anachronisms gave them no concern, because they knew that the names of the interlocutors were only used as a vehicle

for conveying the philosophy of the Academy. It would not have been needful to say thus much, had not the notion been very general that we were to look for the doctrines of Socrates in the writings of Plato.

Even the doctrines of Plato himself are not always to be found clearly set forth in his writings, for he seems to have had less of physical courage than his great master, and he has been at considerable pains in those writings which were to be made public, to veil his own opinions under the name of one or other of his interlocutors; and where he is himself the speaker, as in his "Laws," he is exceedingly cautious when he begins to speak on the matter of religion; requiring the festivals of the Gods to be duly observed, although in his "Euthyphron" under the name of Socrates, he had derided the superstitions of the age without mercy. The disguise was but a flimsy one, nevertheless, and he probably owed his safety more to the crest-fallen state of the democratic power, than to his own caution; since a public informer on one occasion is said to have hinted to him that there was still some of Socrates' hemlock left in the cup.*

* Diog. Laert. lib. iii. § 24.

The ridicule cast upon Plato by the comic poets for his gravity, his doctrine of the existence of a soul in man, that would exist after the dissolution of the body, and other Socratic habits and opinions, are among the best proofs that he was a faithful imitator of that excellent man ; and refute sufficiently the charges brought against his morals by others, grounded chiefly on some poetry said to be his ; but which, if written by him at all, were apparently a part of the early performances which, after hearing Socrates for the first time, he solemnly devoted to the god of fire. His gentleness towards those about him, his temperance, his courage when he believed there was any special duty to be fulfilled, are the best comments on his opinions.

If we may assume the words put in the mouth of the Pythagorean Timæus, to be those of Plato himself ; the following is his notion of the origin of the universe. The first thing to be determined, he says, is, what that is which is eternal, and therefore self-existent ?—We take cognisance of this by our reason, and we know that it must be unchangeable : by our senses we are made aware of another something which is constantly changing ; being born, destroyed, and reproduced : but since what has a beginning,

must have a cause ; this has therefore no existence proper to itself. Thus the material universe must be produced by the Eternal Cause and Father of all things, who is good, intelligent, and almighty ; but difficult to be sought out by the wisest even,—incomprehensible to the vulgar. This eternal Father has fashioned the world after a pattern in his own thoughts, and considering that nothing is perfectly good without a soul, he has made the universe a living being, having material parts, animated by a divine spirit. All this is still only a refinement on the Orphic doctrine, which, in fact, was but the truth disguised ; and as Pythagoras seems to have again made this truth clear to his disciples, it is easily conceivable that Plato in studying the Pythagorean opinions, found them on the whole satisfactory, and only improved upon them a little for his own school.

In morals he seems to have trod very closely in the steps of his master Socrates, teaching that temperance, justice, submission to the laws, and perfect purity of life, were requisite to form a wise man, and that none but a good man could be a happy one. He appears to have made an effort to spiritualize and purify the passionate love of beauty which prevailed among

the Greeks, and thus to reform the general licentiousness of manners: for, according to him, beauty is but the reflection, in the features, of the beautiful soul within: it is to be preserved only by virtuous dispositions, and those who love to contemplate it, should cherish it by cultivating in the object they admire those perfections, which, as life advances, may form the foundation of a lasting friendship. He considered the soul as independent of the body, and held it to be a part of the Divine Spirit which the Creator had enwrapped in matter; its beatification, probably, for that is not quite so clear, he considered to be a re-absorption into the Deity; though in some places, particularly in his *Phædon*, he makes Socrates speak of the happiness of meeting with glorified and happy spirits in another state of being. The proofs, however, which he endeavours to give of the immortality of the soul are weak, so weak that Cicero, though wishing to believe the doctrine, makes his auditor declare that he found them unsatisfactory.*

In physics, Plato appears to have embraced the atomic theory of the Pythagorean school;

* Cic. *Tusc. Quest.* lib. i. c. 11.

and, late in life, their astronomical views also. Some passages in his *Timæus* would lead us almost to imagine that the Pythagorean doctrines trod close on the heels of modern science. A natural philosopher of our own age could scarcely have been more explicit than Plato, in assuring us that the action of magnetism and electricity, as shown in the loadstone, and amber when excited by friction, was not owing to any peculiar attraction in those substances, but to the movements communicated through contiguous particles under peculiar circumstances. His theory of the nourishment of the body by the affinity of certain particles for each other, and their consequent assimilation, is also in great measure that of modern chemistry; and like modern chemists too he separates the immortal soul from the life of the body. He considers man to be gifted with three souls, i. e. the undying one which survives the body, and is peculiar to man; the mental one which we term the faculties, of which beasts partake in a certain degree; and the purely mortal, which consists in the organic life, which is shared alike by plants and animals.

In politics,—for there is no subject which the capacious mind of Plato did not embrace;—his

views are peculiar and full of interest. He had looked with the eye of a wise and good man on the disorders of the state, and the consequent oppression of the people in his days ; and in his " Republic," and his " Laws," he seems to have been endeavouring to discover and point out a remedy. And here we are at once struck with the inefficiency of all the means which the superstition of those days afforded towards the reform of society. Aware that nothing but national virtue could insure national prosperity, he proposes to eradicate vices by destroying the individual will of the citizen. The Spartans had shown that this was no impossible plan, for the laws of Lycurgus had in great measure effected it during some centuries. Plato proposes to make his citizens merely portions of the body politic : no one was to have liberty to regulate his own life ; every hour was to have its employ regulated by law ; no possibility of increase of property, no domestic relations were to insulate the citizen from the state : but in this imaginary state of his he forgets what it is which endears his country to man ; for it is not an abstract term that can be loved. Even in Lacedæmon natural affection was not wholly trampled on ; the mother of the Spartan was

his counsellor and his guide : the "Return with this, or on it," of the matron arming her son for the battle, when she handed him his shield, is well known : when the unfortunate Agis perished in the endeavour to restore the laws of Lycurgus, his mother and his grandmother shared, and aided in his designs, and fell with him ; and generally the women of Laconia played a very different part in society from the rest of their sex in the Grecian states. Probably his increasing respect for the Spartan lawgiver induced him, in his "Laws," to abandon that part of the views advocated in the "Republic," which relates to women, for he here proposes to train them, as in Sparta, to martial exercise, and to give them a share in the affairs of the government, as the means of rendering them virtuous and useful, as well as capable, on a last emergency, of defending themselves and their children from an invading foe. He proscribes all commerce, as a source of vice ; and would insulate the state as far as possible from all others, in order to avoid the danger of contamination ; and,—whether to avoid prosecution, or upon the conviction of his own mind, is not certain,—he determines that the views of the philosophic few must not be spread among the

multitude, who are still to have their tutelary deities. In this he appears to have varied somewhat from his master Socrates, who conversed with persons of all classes, and endeavoured to spread his opinions among the tradesmen and peasants of Attica, no less than among the noble and the rich.

In regard to what is technically called ontology, or the science of what exists;—he considered ideas as a kind of emanation from objects, which thus became matters of sense to us: we having no means of examining the object itself, but only the idea which is impressed on the sensorium: but as these are views which are of little import to matters of common life, it would be foreign to the purpose of this work to enter further into them.

The school of Plato, or as it is more generally termed, of the Academy, was carried on after his death by his nephew Speusippus, a man much inferior to his uncle both in talent and conduct;* and after him by Xenocrates, whose slow parts had made Plato call him his donkey; but whose unspotted virtue threw into his teaching a persuasive force which was better

* Diog. Laert. in vit. Speusipp.

than brilliancy. There is a pleasing anecdote recorded of this, which, though often repeated, should not be omitted here. One morning,—for the school of Xenocrates was open early,—whilst the philosopher was lecturing, Polemon, a young and gay Athenian, crowned with roses and his robes disordered, was reeling home from a supper party;—he saw the door open, and entered. Of course such a visitor drew all eyes, and Xenocrates, changing his subject, turned his discourse to the beauty of virtue, and the degrading consequences of intemperance. Polemon, who probably came to scoff, remained to listen: gradually his heart was moved;—he stole his hand to his head and removed the garland; presently he composed his robe to a more decent fashion; and by the time the philosopher had finished his lecture, he left the place sobered for ever.* From that time he emulated Xenocrates in temperance and virtue, and after his death succeeded to his chair in the Academy. One more anecdote of Plato's donkey ere we leave him to the esteem and affection of the good. When called upon to give evidence in some trial, the oath was tendered to him as

* Val. Max. vi. 9. Diog. Laert. lib. iv. § 16.

usual; but the people with one accord exclaimed that it was an insult to tender an oath to him who knew not what untruth was: Xenocrates should not be sworn, for his affirmation was of more worth than the oath of any other man.* To this may be added that, when forming one of a deputation to Philip of Macedon, that monarch declared that Xenocrates was the only one whom he had found inaccessible to a bribe.† Whilst the Academy was supported by such teachers can we wonder at its fame?

The doctrines of Plato remained nearly unaltered in the hands of his immediate successors, but under ARCESILAUS, the friend of CRANTOR, which latter occupied the chair after Polemon; a change was introduced, and the saying of Socrates that his whole wisdom consisted in knowing that he knew nothing, was enlarged into a maxim of the school. The sceptic philosophy of Pyrrhon who doubted of all things ‡ was then

* Diog. Laert. lib. iv. § 7. † Ib. § 8.

‡ This philosopher was so serious in his doubts of the reality of things, that he never turned aside to avoid any obstacle, be it what it might, and was only saved from danger by his more sane friends, who, knowing his fancy, were wont to follow him in his walks. Diog. Laert. lib. ix. § 62.

gaining celebrity, and the Academy under Arcesilaus seems to have approximated to this sect so far as to deny that man's reason is capable of attaining to complete certainty on any point. The character of Arcesilaus himself probably tended to this change, for far from following the example of his great predecessors, this philosopher disgraced his great talents by a licentious life, and the notion that right and wrong might be a matter of doubt, was a convenient tenet for such a man. He died of a frenzy caused by excessive intoxication, at the age of seventy-five;* and was succeeded by LACYDES, who following in his steps, died of a stroke of palsy from the same cause.†

CARNEADES made a yet farther innovation on the doctrines of Plato; and held that all truth had a certain degree of error attached to it so intimately, and resembling it so closely, that there was no certain method for deciding between them; on which account a full assent to any opinion should be withheld. Cicero, who appears to have admired the writings of Carneades, and the doctrines of the Academy as taught by him, and afterwards by Antiochus; tells us

* Diog. Laert. lib. iv. § 44.

† Ib. § 61.

that the object of this suspension of judgment was, to elicit the truth by calm discussion; to show e. g. not that the gods did not exist, but that the stoics had not proved that they did: * a system which Cicero follows up himself in his philosophical treatises where he gives the tenets of the different schools, and points out the weak parts in their arguments with much impartiality. In morals Carneades taught that the ultimate end of existence was "to enjoy natural principles," † a phrase so obscure that it makes any further discussion of his doctrine on this head quite hopeless. He was a man of acute perceptions, and a clever lecturer and disputant: ‡ but Greek Philosophy was no longer what it had been in the hands of its earlier teachers. It was now mixed up with the arts of the sophists, and had lost the earnestness and reality given to it by men who looked to great objects, and who instead of aiming merely at a reputation for cleverness, sought to confer a lasting benefit on mankind.

* Cic. de Nat. Deor. l. i. c. 2.

† *Frui principiis naturalibus.* Cic. de Fin. l. ii. c. 11.

‡ Diog. Laert. in vit. Carn.



IV.

THE CYRENAIC AND CYNIC SECTS.

TWO other schools of philosophy, if they may so be called, arose after the death of Socrates: the Cyrenaic and the Cynic. At the head of the first was Aristippus, a hearer, but hardly to be called a disciple of the martyred sage. He was a man of luxurious habits,* and taught that sensual pleasure was the great object of life: but human nature loves not degradation, and this part of his system scarcely outlived him, but gave way to the tenet, that comfort was the great object of existence, and that, therefore, when life was become a source of uneasiness, it was well to quit it. Perhaps this alteration in the Cyrenaic doctrine may have been owing to Arete, the daughter of Aristippus, who became a philosophical teacher,

* See Xenoph. Mem. l. ii. c. 1. Diog. Laert. in vit. Aristippi.

and was the instructor of her son, distinguished from his grandfather of the same name by the *sobriquet* of μητροδιδάκτος, — mother-taught. As the Cyrenaic school soon sunk into obscurity, or rather was merged in the more flourishing one of Epicurus, it will not be needful to give a longer notice of it here.

The Cynic sect, so called from the Cynosargos, a gymnasium where its first professors used to teach; was founded by Antisthenes, a devoted disciple of Socrates, who was wont every day to walk from Peiræus, where he resided, in order to listen to that excellent man's lessons of wisdom. After the death of his admired master, Antisthenes betook himself to a life of extraordinary and ostentatious austerity; and setting at nought the ordinary comforts of life, devoted himself wholly to the reproof of vice and luxury, in one of the most vicious and luxurious cities of antiquity. Among other of his severe taunts, it is recorded that some young men from Pontus, having come to Athens, attracted by the fame of Socrates, just when that philosopher had suffered death; he assured them he would shew them a wiser man than him whom they sought, and led them to Anytus the prosecutor, who was forced to take to

flight before the indignation thus excited against him.*

DIOGENES of Sinope, whose name has become famous, and almost infamous, from a variety of lying tales, readily enough devised and repeated by those who wished to crush the daring of the philosophic party, or dreaded the stern morality it taught,—was the scholar of Antisthenes, and so determined to be so, that when this latter, not wishing for pupils, treated him with harshness, and even threatened him with his staff, he replied, that “he would find no staff hard enough to drive him away ;” and the stern Cynic was moved at last to receive him. Every one has heard of the tub of Diogenes, of his reply to Alexander, and of that monarch’s observation in consequence; yet it appears probable that these are all fables of the same cast with the impurities attributed to the Cynics, whose extreme severity of life, joined to their contempt of all sensuality, gives the lie to the slander.† Diogenes is recorded to have

* Diog. Laert. lib. vi. § 10.

† For a farther examination into the chronological discrepancies which refute these tales, see Brucker’s *Hist. Crit. Phil. De Secta Cynica*.

been taken by pirates during a voyage, and sold in the slave market in Crete, where he was bought by Xeniadēs, a Corinthian, who, when he had taken him home, finding him to be no ordinary man, set him free, and employed him as tutor to his children; in which capacity Diogenes acquitted himself so conscientiously, that Xeniadēs is said to have blessed the day that brought such a friend into his house.

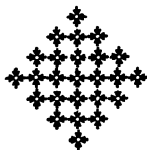
Among the scholars of Diogenes, CRATES, a Theban, was the most famous: a man so highly respected, that he was the general composer of differences throughout Athens.* Of him too, and his wife Hipparchia, many tales have been told, which are refuted by the general character of the man: they originated probably in the same causes which had subjected every one to slander whose life and doctrines ran counter to the general licentiousness, and who did not join in the prevailing superstition. Libertines hated the stern censor of vice;—the people dreaded the loss of the sacrifices and the Dionysia.

The Cynic sect appears rather to have instituted an especial mode of life, than a philoso-

* Brucker Hist. Crit. Phil. Pars. II. lib. II. c. 8.

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phical system; it was in fact, the mendicant order of philosophy; and, like the mendicant orders of the Christian church, and all other ascetics who require a severity of life which nature opposes, after the first enthusiasm was over, its professors degenerated, till in later times they became justly infamous. Crates was the master of Zeno of Cittieum, the founder of the Stoics.





V.

ARISTOTELES AND THE
PERIPATETICS.

B. C. 335 TO — ?

AMONG the pupils of Plato, about the same time that Xenocrates was learning to grace his slow parts with the higher beauty of moral virtue, another young man was seen, whose disposition and appearance was the reverse of the other in all but that last, best ornament of man, the love of virtue. ARISTOTELES, the son of a physician of Stagira, a small town on the borders of Macedon, but then an orphan, and the inheritor of a large fortune,—at seventeen years of age entered the Academy. His talents soon attracted the notice of his discerning master, who, having jestingly compared the slow mental pace of Xenocrates to that of an ass, always needing the spur; now likened the acuteness of Aristoteles to the headlong speed of a horse, which requires a bridle to pre-

vent him from running away.* He was of slight form and weak constitution, and was noted by his contemporaries for a more than ordinary attention to dress and ornament: but none of these things were any hindrance to his eager pursuit of science, which ceased not, but with his life. During twenty years he was the pupil and friend of Plato, who was wont to call him, "the mind of the Academy," and if he was not present, would exclaim, that "the audience was deaf, for the intellect was absent." †

The connexion of the young student's father, Nicomachus, with the court of Macedon, as physician to the king, probably led to the notice bestowed upon him by Philip, who, on the birth of his son Alexander, is said to have written to Aristoteles, informing him of the fact; and adding, "we thank the gods for their gift, but especially for bestowing it at the time when Aristoteles lives; assuring ourselves, that educated by you he will be worthy of us, and worthy of inheriting our kingdom." ‡ It does not however, appear that this letter, if indeed it be

* Diog. Laert. lib. iv. § 6.

† Brucker Hist. Crit. Phil. Pars. ii. lib. ii. c. 7.

‡ Aulus Gellius, cited by Gillies.

genuine, drew him away from Athens; for he did not commence his duties as preceptor until fourteen years after.

When Speusippus succeeded to the chair of the Academy, after the death of his uncle Plato, Aristoteles quitted Athens; disgusted, probably, at seeing the place of his admired master very inadequately filled. One of his fellow-pupils and friends had been Hermeias, a eunuch, and once a slave; but now raised to the sovereignty of Assus and Atarneus, two Greek cities of Mysia. In the latter of these cities Aristoteles had passed some part of his youth, in the family of Proxenus, a citizen of that place; and as we find Nicanor the son of Proxenus afterwards adopted by him, and made the heir of his property, so it is likely that motives of gratitude as well as friendship led him thither. The seizure and execution of Hermeias by the officers of Artaxerxes, made Aristoteles think it needful to provide for his own safety: he fled to Mitylene, in the island of Lesbos; taking with him Pythias, the kinswoman of Hermeias, whom he there married. He passed two years in Lesbos, and here his wife died, leaving him an infant daughter. It was her dying wish that her bones might be placed beside those of her husband

in the grave, and, at his death, her request was scrupulously fulfilled.

The wish of the Macedonian monarch that Aristoteles should undertake the education of his son, was probably now reiterated; for, shortly after, he journeyed to the court of Philip, and became the honoured preceptor of the young Alexander. During eight years he executed the office with a care and success which made his pupil the wonder of his own, and after ages: and, on the accession of that prince to the throne, he once more returned to Athens; where, finding Xenocrates in possession of the Academy, he opened a school of philosophy in a gymnasium near the temple of the Lycian Apollo in the suburbs, and thence called the Lyceum; and here, during thirteen years, he continued to teach his exact and profound philosophy. Whilst Alexander lived, his preceptor was respected; but no sooner had death closed the career of that great monarch, than the kind of accusations formerly made against Socrates, were renewed against Aristoteles: the doctrines of his school were too pure for the prevailing corruption, and a prosecution was commenced against him; which, however, he avoided by removing to Chalcis in Eubœa, saying that he was unwilling

to afford the Athenians a second opportunity of sinning against philosophy. He did not long survive his voluntary banishment, and died at Chalcis, in his sixty-third year, about a year after.*

The followers of Aristoteles were termed Peripatetics; either, as some say, from his habit of conveying his lessons to his royal pupil in conversation while walking; or because his lectures in the Lyceum were so delivered. His writings have come down to us in a very imperfect state; for after having passed into the hands of his scholar Theophrastus, with the rest of his library, they were left by that philosopher in turn to his own pupil Neleus, who, carrying the whole with him to Scepsis, a town of Troas, left this most valuable collection to his heirs, with his other property. These, being unlettered men, knew not the value of this bequest, but hearing that the king of Pergamus was collecting a library, and fearing that they should be robbed of their books, they concealed them in a dark vault, where they remained undiscovered

* For a more detailed account of this philosopher, see his life, prefixed to Dr. Gillies's translation of his *Ethics* and *Politics*.

for many generations; till at last they were sold for a large sum to Apellicon of Athens, whose library was seized and transmitted to Rome by Sylla, when that city fell into his hands. At Rome, in the days of Cicero, the writings of Aristoteles could be appreciated; and Andronicus of Rhodes, a philosopher then residing there, undertook the task of editing them in the best manner which their mutilated state permitted: * for it appears that it was only a *copy* of the original which Sylla had possessed himself of. Probably the original had been too far decayed when it came into the hands of Apellicon, to invite its preservation; for Strabo observes that he was a book collector merely, not a philosopher.

The writings of Aristoteles appear originally to have embraced the whole round of human knowledge in those days, but neither the military power of Rome, nor the sway of the emperors was favourable to the progress of philosophy, and Christianity soon raised itself on the ruins of all three; and when, after the period of harassing warfare and barbarian invasion had passed away, his works were re-discovered in

* Plutarch. in vit. Syllæ.

later times ; his logic won the most attention. In this he reduced argument to a regular form ; and though we may now doubt if this form be so widely applicable as was at first supposed, no one can deny its excellence as a mental exercise ; for nothing better shows the absurdity of a false argument than a syllogism ;* and though upwards of two thousand years have elapsed since their death, we have not yet found a better guide in the art of reasoning than Aristoteles, or in mathematics than Euclides :—no small praise to the old philosophers of Greece.

Like Cicero in after times, he addressed his chief work on moral duties to his son Nicomachus, the fruit of a second marriage, who seems to have been a child when his father died. Like

* A syllogism is the result of an argument, condensed into two propositions, called the major and the minor, and the conclusion resulting from them. As 'God is self-existent, but what is self-existent must be one, therefore God is one.' Here we have the last result of a long series of argument, brought before us in a brief and tangible form, and if either the one proposition or the other can be impugned, it vitiates the conclusion. An argument therefore may be reduced to a series of syllogisms ; for every fresh step made, admits of being reduced to this form. Those who wish to know more of the abstruser works of Aristoteles, will find an able analysis of them in Dr. Gillies's work already referred to.

the great Roman moralist too, his precepts, being founded on the immutable law of God written in man's heart from the beginning, have a striking resemblance, or rather, are in many cases identical with those of Christianity. The following rule for judging of our proficiency in virtue is such as Christ himself might have spoken. "The sign of our habitual state of mind," says he, "is the pleasure or pain which we have in our actions : he who withdraws from corporeal pleasures with a feeling of satisfaction in so doing, is really and wisely temperate ; he who does so, but grieves at it, is still a voluptuary at heart."* It would be impossible in this small work to quote abundance of passages which breathe no less admirable sentiments : it will be easier to point out the very few points where the heathen falls behind the Christian moralist. With regard to the immortality of the soul he seems to have entertained less clear notions than Plato even, and was far behind Socrates : his idea of liberality is of habits bordering on ostentation ; and his estimate of slaves, whom he calls merely "living tools," and of women, whom he places not many degrees be-

* Aristot. Eth. ad Nichom. lib. ii. c. 2.

yond them, is far far indeed below that of the Apostle who proclaims that before God "there is neither male nor female, bond nor free." Yet we can hardly blame the heathen, without throwing a quadruple load on the shoulders of the so-called Christian of modern times, who, with all the light of that gospel which eighteen hundred years ago preached peace and good-will to the whole human race, has still left many a pariah caste, uncared for by the laws, or marked only by their stinging severity.

In his Politics, Aristoteles is far more practical than Plato, whose notions on government he criticises with much good sense. But his own views are not unobjectionable; and the faults in his Ethics, already mentioned, show themselves with double force when the abstract notion takes form and likelihood in the regulation of a state. Acknowledging that the slave population formed the weak point in every country that he was acquainted with: acknowledging that for the most part they were the natural enemies of their lords; he does not seem to have been able to discover that such a system must be radically bad. On the contrary, imputing the faults of slaves to their kind of employment, he forbids his citizens to undertake any indus-

trial labours; thus perpetuating, as far as in him lay, a system of idle tyrants, supported by the industry of numerous enemies, kept within the bounds of obedience only by severity. Yet his clear and argumentative mind saw the contradictions in reasoning which his own system involved, and he states them fairly. "If," he says, "a slave be capable of any virtues, wherein does he differ from a free man? If we say he is not, and yet allow him to be a man, and consequently endued with reason, the conclusion seems absurd. The same difficulty occurs with regard to women and children: and yet how can one party be formed to obey and the other to rule, if both are by nature capable of the same virtues?"* Yet though seeing the absurdity, prejudice prevailed over reason, even in his powerful mind, and he concludes at last, that slaves, women, and children, are incapable of the virtues, which in their capacity of man, generically, he had already acknowledged to form part of their very nature. A weakness hardly to have been expected from the inventor of the syllogism.

In his natural philosophy he falls behind

* Polit. lib. i. c. 8.

some of the older philosophers of Greece, and argues against their opinions in a way that was scarcely to be expected from a man of his acute perceptions: but he seems to have bewildered himself in his own logic, which, though it detects the fallacies of an argument when there are right premises to go upon, does not suffice if these are wanting. Thus, he conceives that he refutes Thales' opinion, that "the earth floats in the air as a piece of wood does in the water,"—by saying, that "the earth is specifically heavier than the air, and, therefore, it cannot so float: "* and he endeavours to overthrow the opinion of Pythagoras, that the centre is occupied by a globe of fire, round which the planets move; by shewing that the power of gravitation acts in angles which meet in the centre of the earth, and this he takes as a proof that the earth is the centre of all things.† He comments severely on the atomic system of the Ionian and Italian schools, insisting that every thing, even if not actually so divided, is capable of division *ad infinitum*; and in every one of the above cases he brings forward a shew of close argument, vitiated only by his ignorance of first principles, which, whilst

* De Cælo, lib. ii. c. 13.

† Ib. c. 14.

devoting his attention to the forms of reasoning, he seems to have overlooked. In this respect he must yield to Democritus, who, after a life devoted to experimental philosophy, found out that his chief science consisted in knowing that he had not yet reached, nor could hope to reach, THE TRUTH.

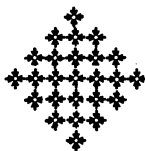
On the subject of the soul he confesses himself to be at a loss ; yet on this point his reasoning is in many parts just. Probably on points where human reason can never arrive at perfect certainty, he who sets off by seeking an approximation only, by rejecting error after error as it fails to bear the test of rational inquiry, will approach nearer to it than he who sets off with the notion that he can reach at once the whole depth and height of knowledge ; a position which no human intellect ever yet attained. It is to the scarcely embodied conceptions of some great mind, expressed in the modest language of doubt, that the next age commonly owes its discoveries,—experimented upon and proved by men much inferior to him who but dimly saw the form of truth in the distance, and pointed to the glorious vision. Thus it is that Anaxagoras, who only directed men's eyes towards the right point, was nearer to the

truth in many instances, than Aristoteles, who submitted the sublime conceptions of his predecessor to what he conceived to be logical and mathematical demonstration; forgetting that he himself had not sufficient facts to ground his arguments upon. He has, however, rightly exposed the error of those who conceived the soul to be the cause of motion; for this, he says, is common to the lowest grades of animals as well as the highest, and it would be a daring stretch of imagination which would give a soul to an oyster: he has rightly shewn that in plants even, there is vegetative life, and concludes therefore, that the human soul must be something apart from this vegetative and sensitive life: but the defective state of anatomical science here stopped him short, and in his farther progress he argues on false premises. Finally, having come to the conclusion, that the soul is as distinct from the body, as the sight is from the pupil of the eye; *—an immeasurable distinction *then*, when the properties of the nerves were not known,—he leaves the great question, which is the first and the last with every thinking man, unanswered. Whether the soul is, or is not immortal, was

* De Anim. lib. ii. c. 1.

felt, not argued by the elder sages; and their feelings led them right, even when their reasonings carried no weight.

It would be vain to attempt to follow the extensive researches of the great Stagirite in the compass of a few pages. Those who are able to read his works will find their labour well rewarded; those who are not, will at least here learn to give due honour to one of those master minds that are sent into the world from time to time, to influence the destiny of their fellow men.





VI.

ZENO AND THE STOICS.

B. C. 310? TO —?

ZENO, whose name has long been famous as the founder of the Stoic sect of philosophy, was the son of a rich merchant of Cit-tieum, a Phœnician colony in the island of Cyprus. He is said to have devoted his attention to the Socratean doctrines very early; but his future fame as the head of a sect was probably the result of an accident. He put to sea with a cargo for Athens, and either landed, or was shipwrecked off Peiræus. On going into the town he entered a bookseller's shop, and taking up the second book of Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, after a short time he was so struck with it, that he asked the bookseller where such men were to be found now? At that moment, Crates the Cynic was passing, and the man pointed to him, and bade the stranger ask him, if he wished to know. Zeno took the bookseller's hint and became a disciple of Crates: but there was some-

thing so revolting in the utter contempt for all the lesser decencies of life which formed a part of the Cynic's doctrine, that he never could entirely reconcile himself to their discipline; and Crates having taken rough measures to cure him of his squeamishness,* his scholar forsook him in disgust, and became a pupil of Stilpo the Megarian, who was either a disciple of Euclides, the assiduous hearer of Socrates, or at least belonged to that school. Stilpo, like most of those who had imbibed the Socratean doctrines, despised the polytheism and idolatry of the age, and one day unguardedly expressed his opinion that the *statue* of Minerva was not a god: for this he was cited before the Areopagus, and though he defended himself in the only way that such a charge could be met, by saying that he had spoken truly, for according to their own shewing it was not a *god* but a *goddess*, he could not

* He gave him an earthen pot of boiled lentils to carry through the Cerameicus: which was like sending a gentleman in our own days, on such an errand, past the club houses in Pall Mall and St. James's Street. Zeno strove to hide the pan under his robe; which Crates seeing, broke it with his stick; so that the pottage ran down the legs of his mortified scholar. Diog. Laert. lib. vii. § 3.

escape banishment from Athens for his irreverence. It was probably in consequence of his leaving the place that Zeno, after having remained ten years in his school,* sought a new master in the Academy, where Polemon then presided.

Having thus prepared himself by studying under all the most famous masters for many years, he at length undertook to found a new sect himself; and as all the usual places of philosophical resort were already occupied, he took possession of the party-coloured colonnade or Stoa, so termed from the paintings which decorated its walls. From this place of meeting his followers were called Stoics. Here he taught what he wished to be considered as a new system; yet as his predecessors had, in most things, approached very near the truth, there was not much room for novelty, and Cicero expressly asserts that Zeno was rather an inventor of new terms, than a discoverer of new things;† and professes himself unable to find any good reason why he should have dissented from the early masters of the Academy.‡

* Diog. Laert. lib. vii. § 2.

† Cic. de Fin. lib. iii. c. 2.

‡ Ib. lib. iv. c. 2.

In his life, this philosopher was self-denying* and unostentatious; and the severe observations which have been made upon this sect were probably more deserved by his successors than himself. It is a fault of judgment when we impute to any man opinions which do not square with his life; for it is much more possible that he may express himself ill, or that we may misunderstand him, than that what is truly believed should not influence the conduct. If, therefore, we can draw immoral or false consequences from a doctrine, which are not discoverable in the life of the first promulgator, it is quite clear that *he* did not perceive those consequences; and we may question his logic, but not his intention. "By their fruits ye shall know them," was the rule of ONE who assuredly knew human nature well. Whatever, then, were the contradictions and false consequences in the doctrines of Zeno, it is most probable that his own mind was influenced by the sublimer part of them; and that he had overlooked those discrepancies which

* It became a proverbial expression to describe a man of singularly correct and abstemious life, to say that he was "more temperate than Zeno the philosopher." Diog. Laert. lib. vii. § 27.

were so much animadverted on by his opponents. Few of the philosophers of antiquity had the excellent judgment of Socrates, who measuring justly in his own capacious mind the defective state of the natural sciences in his age, at once abandoned the study as affording no chance of arriving at the truth,—professed that his knowledge consisted in knowing his own ignorance, and enforced nothing but what, thanks to the very constitution of nature,—must be discovered by every deep thinker; i. e. the existence of a First Cause, and the duties and hopes resulting from this one piece of true science. Had Zeno stopped here, his teaching would have been more useful, and not open to animadversion; but he lost himself in the mazes of natural philosophy, whilst endeavouring to tell more than he knew. In the first steps of his system there is a wonderful resemblance to the Hebrew doctrine, which some of the early Christian Fathers assert Plato to have borrowed from Moses,* and which Zeno appears to have taken from Plato; for he evidently was unable to reason logically upon it himself.

According to Zeno, then, “ There is One God,

* See Clem. Alex. Strom. passim.

Mind, Fate, or Jove, known also by other names. This God in the beginning, being alone and self-existing, changed the substance of the air into water, and as the living seed is contained in the fœtus, so he, being the life-giving and efficient reason (*λογος*) of the world, placed his Spirit in the waters to be the cause of the generation of all things; and thus were created the four elements, out of which all things were made, and into which they will again be resolved.* We next find him arguing, that the world, or universe, is itself the only Deity, upon the following very insufficient and illogical grounds. "Whatever is possessed of reason is better than what is not possessed of reason:—there is nothing better than the world, therefore the world is possessed of reason. In the same manner it may be proved that the world is wise, and eternal; for what is possessed of these qualities is better than what is not possessed of them;—but there is nothing better than the world, hence it is clear that the world is God."† The man who was unable to discern such palpable contradictions as the above in his own tenets, must

* Diog. Laert. lib. vii. § 136.

† Cic. de Nat. Deor. lib. ii. c. 8.

have been strangely wanting in logical precision ; and accordingly we find the same illogical conclusions, mixed with noble thoughts occasionally, throughout the Stoical system. In some parts the Orphic doctrine is revived in its worst form, as when it is asserted that God being in all things, these things may be venerated and worshipped as gods,* and thus such deifications as fortune, honour, fear, &c., may be allowed ; nay, even vices may be thus worshipped, as effecting some good purpose in the world.

It is not easy to follow arguments so utterly inconsequential as those of the Stoic philosophy : it may, therefore, suffice to say, that the stars, sun, moon, &c., are held to be self-moved deities : that providence is only a term to express the rational foresight of these revolving beings, and that to talk of any existing Providence, exterior to them, would be like supposing the Athenian state to have a government when the people were taken away : † that the universe is God : ‡ and then in defiance of all consistency we find, —“ God who is the maker of all things, and has formed them from his own existence, who after

* Cic. de Nat. Deor. lib. ii. c. 29.

† Ib.

‡ Diog. Laert. lib. vii. § 148.

a time dissolves, and again re-makes them, is self-existent and incorruptible*—God being eternal has created all things†—God is an immortal being, rational, perfect; ruling the universe and all things in it, as the Maker and Father of all: but he is not in human form."‡ That acute men, as many of the Stoics are known to have been, should have gone on uttering such contradictions for three or four centuries, appears almost unaccountable: one lesson, however, it may teach us, which is not altogether needless at any time; it shews the power of prejudice on minds otherwise cultivated, and is a good instance of the danger of receiving dogmata upon authority, without examination.

The moral doctrines of the Stoics are better known than their theology and physics. They taught that the great object, *τέλος*, of man's existence, was, to live according to the tendencies of his nature; these being exhibited in the instinctive affection towards offspring, social ties, &c.; and the duties springing out of such relations were considered as forming part of these tendencies. Reason being the noblest part of our nature, this of course claimed the most re-

* Diog. Laert. lib. vii. § 137. † Ib. § 134. ‡ Ib. § 147.

gard, and he who lived according to reason, giving due attention to the duties springing from the tendencies of our nature, was a happy man. If then, happiness consists in living virtuously, there can be no pain but that of living viciously; therefore bodily pain is no evil; and the virtuous man on some occasions sets it at nought, and finds pleasure in so doing. But the Stoic's virtuous man had no inducement to virtue: he was not promised immortality, for the soul was held to be of corruptible materials, and Zeno himself is said to have considered it merely as a warm breath.* The high motive given by the teachers of the Academy, and the great men who preceded them, was therefore, wholly wanting; and the Stoic who called on men to set pleasure at nought, and spend a life of painful sacrifices, could neither offer any sufficient compensation, nor plead the innate dignity of the undying soul; nay, could only have gained converts at all in consequence of an instinctive feeling of things which they either disavowed, or perplexed, in their system of philosophy. It offered no complete solution of the great problem of man's existence; but the mind

* Ib. § 157.

caught at the one great principle of the Eternal Maker of all things, alone in his might and his goodness, and *felt* the consequences of this one tenet even whilst denying them.

Among the slanders heaped on each other by the rival sects of Stoics and Epicureans, it is not easy to distinguish the truth ; but by the rule already laid down, as the lines of the two founders of these famous sects were equally virtuous, though their dispositions were different, we shall probably be nearest the truth by disregarding both. One tenet however which is imputed to Zeno and his followers, seems in some degree proved by the conduct of Cato,* one of the most famed of the Stoic sect. They are said to have taken the doctrine of a community of women from Plato's most visionary work, the " Republic ;" which even his own better sense rejected in his later work on the same subject, i. e. his " Laws." It was only in times when females were so lowered from their human dignity by ignorance, as to be viewed in the light of a property merely, that such a doctrine could have found place : but when such a man as Plato could so speculate,—when such a man as Aristoteles could doubt if women and slaves were *capable* of rational and

* See Plutarch's Life of Cato of Utica.

virtuous conduct, it is not wonderful that Zeno, never an original thinker, should have been led away by their example.

In anatomy the Stoics seem to have made some progress,* and to have made a good use of it, by arguing the existence of the Deity from the curious contrivances in the construction of man's body. The nerves, however, are by them supposed to originate in the heart, which shows that they must have traced their course very carelessly. It is from this ancient notion, probably, that we derive the expression so common still, of—"I have not the heart to do it."—The course of the blood seems to have been tolerably well understood: so well, that it is not very clear why its circulation should not have been so also.

The astronomy of the Stoics partook of all the faults of the times; and of their logic and mode of arguing a sufficient specimen has been given. In manners they affected much of the severity of the Cynics, though they seasoned it with more of gravity and decorum; and, to pursue the comparison with later times, if the Cynics were the mendicant order, we may reckon the Stoics the quakers of philosophy.

* Cic. de Nat. Deor. lib. ii. c. 55.



VII.

EPICURUS AND HIS SCHOOL.

B. C. 307 TO — ?

ZENO had not been long established as the founder of a new sect, when another teacher made his appearance at Athens, whose doctrines were destined to have a larger and longer influence in the world than could have been expected from his parentage and education. EPICURUS was the son of Neocles, an Athenian of good family,* but much reduced in circumstances, who had, in consequence, joined the colonists who were sent to Samos after that country had submitted to the arms of Athens in the time of Pericles. It was in the birthplace of Pythagoras, therefore, that the young Epicurus received his first instruction. This, however, amounted to but little, for his mother was reduced by their poverty to go from house to house

* Diog. Laert. lib. x. § 1. Peisistratus had sprung from the same stock. See Plutarch in Solone.

as a dealer in lustrations and charms, and in these expeditions the boy accompanied her, in order to read the lustratory verses: at other times he assisted his father in the humble business of a schoolmaster. The accidental reading of some of Democritus' treatises is said to have first given him a taste for philosophy.

At eighteen years of age he visited Athens, but whether he profited by the opportunity thus afforded him of enjoying the instruction of Xenocrates, or of Aristoteles, then established at Chalcis in Eubœa, is very uncertain: he is said in after times to have declared that he was self-taught.* The distracted state of political affairs after the death of Alexander, drove him from Athens, and, four or five years after his departure from Samos, he joined his father at Colophon, in Ionia.† Here he remained nearly ten years, after which he passed his time partly at Mitylene, and partly at Lampsacus, till, at the age of thirty-five, or as some say, thirty-seven, he returned to Athens, now restored to freedom by Demetrius Poliorcetes, and having purchased a house and garden for eighty minæ,‡ he there

* Diog. Laert. lib. x. § 11.

See Gassend, *De Vit. et Mor. Epicuri*.

‡ About £320 of modern English money.

opened his school of philosophy. Some friends and disciples seem to have followed him from Lampsacus, and other places; among these Metrodorus was the chief; and they, with some others, seemed to have formed a little society, congregated under the roof of their teacher; whose manners had something so captivating, that his pupils adored, rather than learned of him. Of Metrodorus it is recorded that he had never quitted him but once, and that only for six months, in order to revisit his friends at Lampsacus. Epicurus rewarded his faithful attachment by as faithful a friendship, for Metrodorus dying seven years before his teacher, this latter took the charge of his children, and provided for them in his will.*

It is probable that the disgust which the habits of the Cynics, and the sternness of the Stoic philosophy caused to the gentle nature and weak health of Epicurus, first led him to review the systems which had sprung up before and since the death of Socrates. He is said to have passed over the later ones, as less worth his notice, and to have returned with especial respect to that of Anaxagoras and his pupil Archelaus; so that he

* Diog. Laert. lib. x. § 19, 20, 23.

may be considered as a pupil both of the Italian and Ionic schools, though in many things differing from both. From the Ionic and Pythagorean sects he took the atomic doctrine, adhering, however, most to that form of it which was taught by Democritus, whose books he lectured from: *—from the Cyrenaic sect he borrowed the tenet, that the object of life was pleasure, which he purified at the same time, by specifying that it was *mental* pleasure that he intended; and from Anaxagoras and Socrates he seems to have taken the high tone of morality,† and the disregard for the vulgar superstitions, which distinguish his writings, of which, however, the larger part has unfortunately perished.

The Stoics, jealous of the new teacher, whose doctrines and conduct had much of the gentleness which afterwards characterized Christianity; set themselves in illiberal opposition to him, and endeavoured, by slandering his private conduct, to throw discredit on his tenets. They affected to consider his doctrine, that “pleasure is the summum bonum, pain the great evil of man,” as one of immoral tendency; and without regarding

* Diog. Laert. lib. x. § 4.

† In his letter to Menæceus. Diog. Laert. lib. x.

his real doctrine, or his real life, they represented the little society assembled in his pleasant house and garden, as a set of worthless debauchees and courtesans, and the teacher himself as the leader in every kind of licentiousness. In order to give colour to these representations they forged letters of the most infamous description, which were ascribed to him and his friends;* and others have come down to us, which though not particularized as forged, bear such internal marks of falsehood in their disagreement with known dates, that we may safely add them to the list of the calumnies invented by the opponents of his philosophy, in order to throw discredit on the captivating teacher who thinned the numbers in their schools, by attracting them to his own.

It is worthy of remark that every system of philosophy which arose in Greece, found converts among the female sex also, notwithstanding the hindrances thrown in their way by the prejudices of society, and the ignorance in which that sex was kept by the domestic usages of the country. It is not very creditable to human nature that then and there, as well as till very lately in England, almost every woman who stepped beyond the littlenesses of life, so as to

* Diog. Laert. lib. x. § 3.

fit herself for the greater duties which fall to her lot as a citizen of the state, was made the object of scorn and calumny by a large portion of both sexes; the minds which could surmount such obstacles must therefore have been of no ordinary calibre, and their cowardly enemies had tact enough to know that it was useless to deny the talent which they envied; but it is easy to whisper away the purity of a woman's reputation, and this plan was pursued with unusual success. The consequence has been that names too famous in science and literature to be forgotten, have come down to us with the slander of those days so closely attached to them, that it requires all the acuteness of criticism to separate truth from falsehood, and do justice to these much maligned persons. Every one has repeated the tale of the wonderful learning of the courtesans of Ionia and of Athens:—few have taken the pains to consider that the two characters are incompatible both physically and morally; and still fewer have examined remaining records enough to show by comparison of dates and circumstances, that certainly some of these celebrated women, and most probably all, were but the victims of a kind of ill-nature which even in this age is not wholly unknown.

Among the disciples of Epicurus were many females, some of them the wives of the philosopher's friends, as Themista, whose learning became proverbial; and others, perhaps students under them, who devoted themselves to science, as Leontium, Philænis, &c., who were stigmatized by the unscrupulous Stoics, as women of light character; and supposititious letters and writings were attributed to them in order to support the slander.* Yet Leontium is recorded to have written elegantly and learnedly against Theophrastus;† no light undertaking, and one not to be accomplished by a person whose time was devoted to other occupations so incompatible with severe study. Even the persons who have been so ready to report the accusations of licentiousness and gluttony against Epicurus and his pupils, have contradicted themselves, often in the same page, by noticing the frugal diet of the philosopher and his friends, their close application to study, and the continually increasing infirmity of health, which kept the former for many years a prisoner in his bed, from which he could

* Gassend. de Vit. et Mor. Epicuri, lib. i. c. 8. Athen. lviii. 13.

† Cic. de Nat. Deor. lib. i. c. 33.

not rise without assistance. His request to a friend to send him some "cheese to add to his bread occasionally, when he was inclined to fare sumptuously," * shows sufficiently what were the delicacies which he was accused of setting daily on his table.

It is not pleasant to trace and detect such a course of malignant slander; but it is no more than a duty which every historian owes to calumniated individuals; for were the judgment of posterity always to conform to the prejudices of contemporaries, the motives for well-doing would, in many, be considerably lessened: among such, at least, as consider an honest fame in this world as one of the rewards of a life spent in the performance of sometimes painful duties. It is still more unpleasant to find contemporary prejudices carried on through successive generations, and repeated by such men as Cicero; whose acute mind and habits of pleading ought to have led him to detect the truth. Yet even he, while repeating the often told slanders, is obliged to confess that the death of Epicurus was marked by a calmness and patience amid the severest sufferings, more heroic even than the self-sacrifice

* Diog. Laert. lib. x. § 10.

of Leonidas, or the fortitude of Epaminondas.* The gentle and affectionate disposition of the man is shown in his will, when he makes provision for the orphan children of his friend Metrodorus, and appoints guardians for them from among his other disciples; to this he adds a request that his friends would meet once a month in memory of him, and leaves funds for defraying the expense of the entertainment. His pleasant little residence he left to Hermachus, one of his disciples, and to his successors in the philosophical chair.

No teacher ever enjoyed so long and affectionate a remembrance among his disciples as Epicurus. In the time of Cicero the ornament of cups, the impress of seals, the pictures in the hall of entertainment still represented the features of the honoured founder of the sect in the houses of his followers,† and the name and observance only became obsolete when all philosophical sects merged in the one great rule of Christianity which this school closely resembled in many of its precepts.

The Epicurean philosophy has been chiefly famed on account of its tenets with regard to

* Cic. de. Fin. lib. ii. c. 30.

† Ib. lib. v. c. 2.

the material universe. Epicurus received his earliest impressions in science from the works of Democritus, and there was much in the writings of that naturalist which must have been fascinating to a young mind. He adopted his views with regard to the eternity of matter, the infinitely numerous atoms* of which, eternally moving and floating in an infinite vacuum, form, by their concretion, the different bodies of the material universe. These bodies, when dissolved, return to their primary atoms, but the sum of matter remains unchanged; it always has been and always will be the same.†

According to him there are three criteria of truth, i. e. sense; anticipation (*πρόληψις*); and emotion (*πάθος*). Sense is the proper judge of material things, for, being wholly unreasoning, it can have no motive for deceiving us, and reports truly what it is conscious of: *πρόληψις* i. e. the seizing on beforehand, is that comprehension by which unseen things have their representatives in the mind, as in memory, or abstract ideas of things, *πάθος* i. e. whatever is passively endured, may be reduced to two heads,—plea-

* i. e. indivisible particles.

† See his letter to Herodotus given by Diog. Laert. lib. x.

sure and pain. But beyond the actuality of body and space, nothing can be properly comprehended; because, if there be natures self-existing, we have nothing analogous to enable us thoroughly to understand them.* Epicurus probably took this also from Democritus, who affirmed that the complete truth was hidden from men too deeply for him to have any hope of attaining it; and this cautious mode of treating the subject perhaps was adopted too, with a view of avoiding the fate of Anaxagoras, Socrates, and others, who had suffered for declaring too plainly that the gods of the people were no gods, and for endeavouring to introduce a more spiritual worship.

Astronomy had been curbed in like manner, by the decree that new notions respecting the heavenly bodies were not to be promulgated, under pain of death; and we find Epicurus speaking no less cautiously on this head: so cautiously, indeed, that it would be difficult to get at his opinion, did not the very doubt expressed

* Diog. Laert. lib. x. § 40. There is a variation, however, in different copies. The above reading is given on the authority of Gassendi, whose diligence in drawing together all that could throw light on the history and doctrines of Epicurus is universally acknowledged.

shew that he was not fully convinced that the generally received system was the right one. The stars may be extinguished at their setting and rekindled at their rising; or they may be obscured by the interposition of the earth during part of their revolution. The heavens may be carried round altogether, or the heavenly bodies may have a separate movement: they may be bigger, or they may be less than they appear to us, &c. : * from all which nothing can be gathered farther than that he either could not, or would not speak more plainly.

With regard to morals Epicurus was much more explicit; and in his letter to Menœceus he gives his code at some length, "No one," he says, "ought to think himself too young or too old for philosophic contemplation; since it is the great business of man to consider what is requisite to the living well:—happily as regards himself and worthily as regards his relations to society. And in the first place, as a needful constituent of this knowledge, we must take care that, believing God to be an immortal and perfectly happy Being, we attribute nothing to him that is inconsistent with these attributes.

* See his letter to Pythocles, Diog. Laert. lib. x.

Thus, though there are gods, as appears evidently from our reason, yet they are not such as they are vulgarly esteemed to be. The following the opinion of the vulgar in this matter constitutes impiety, therefore, not the differing from them: for it is not the *general* anticipation or apprehension of the many respecting the gods that is false, but the *particulars* of their opinion on this subject are so: for they conceive great evils to be caused by the bad among the gods, and what is advantageous, by the good." And here Seneca, though no Epicurean, enables us to fill up the rest of the system, by reproaching Epicurus with reverencing God only as a parent, to be honoured and worshipped for his excellence, without thinking of any gain to be obtained by so doing.* "The wise man," continues Epicurus, "will not consider the loss of life an evil; but as food is chosen for its quality rather than its quantity, so he will endeavour to make his life pleasant rather than long. It is needful to satisfy our physical wants in a certain

* "Deum, Epicure, vis videre colere, non aliter quam parentem? . . . nulla spe, nulla pretio inductus, sed propter ejus majestatem eximiam, supremamque naturam." Seneca de benef. lib. iv. c. 19.

degree, both for the sake of living in comfort, and in order to keep the body tranquil, so as to leave the mind free from disturbance: for our endeavour should be to avoid suffering and perturbation; since pleasure is the great object of life. But it is not every kind of pleasure that will be sought by a wise man; for luxurious feasts are not needful to him who by temperance and exercise has made his bread and water sweet to his taste; therefore, when I speak of pleasure as the summum bonum, I do not mean licentious pleasures: for he only enjoys a truly happy life, who examines his desires by the light of sober reason, and determines which ought to be gratified, which repressed. In short, no man can live happily who does not live wisely and justly, and no man can live wisely and justly without being happy: for virtue and happiness cannot be separated. Nay, were it possible, it would be better to live wisely and to be unhappy, than to be irrational and fortunate. One who acts on these principles lives among men as if he were already a god: he has nothing about him that resembles the brute animal, but though a man, he lives among the immortals.”*

* Ep. ad Menœceum. Diog. Laert. lib. x.

Only one thing is wanting to the excellence of this system; but that one deficiency almost nullified it. Epicurus taught that death was annihilation; and it is in vain that we preach the excellence of virtue if we have no other life to expect, where what we have learned to love and admire may be enjoyed. The very longing after moral perfection becomes a torture if we have no hope that it will ever be fully gratified; for, though nothing can be truer than the position of Epicurus, that virtue and happiness can never be separated, yet this truth is only fully apparent to the mind when it dares to look beyond this world for the completion of its wishes. Then, indeed, the progress of moral improvement is delight, for every step gained promises yet another, and another; and death is only viewed as the removal of obstacles which delayed our onward course. The want of this stimulus in the Epicurean philosophy, made the admirable good sense and good feeling of the gentle founder of the sect unavailing; and when a greater than Epicurus preached the like doctrines, with the one great deficiency supplied as no unassisted human reason could have supplied it, the Epicureans had too generally forgotten the comment, and retained only the maxim that

pleasure is the only good. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," will generally be the termination of any system which rejects the tenet of the soul's immortality.

After Epicurus no other sect of importance sprung up among the Greeks; though slight variations were made in the teaching of the Academy, and the Stoics split into factions, rather than sects, for the real differences were not great. The Epicurean school kept its ground with less change than any other, and in the time of Plutarch even, the name of Metrodorus was authoritative among the disciples of that philosophy.*

From Greece, the love of science spread to Rome, and Athens was to the rude people of that rising empire, what Paris once was to England and to the northern European nations. Greek was the fashionable language, and Athenian philosophers were the fashionable tutors. The elder Cato, clinging to early prejudices, when Carneades, the then head of the Academy, was sent on a political mission to Rome, procured his dismissal, lest he should corrupt the youth

* See Plutarch cont. Koloten.

of the city; yet the old man, before his death, yielded to the universal impulse so far as to learn Greek himself;* and in spite of his warnings, the statesmen and warriors of the great republic became, for the most part, disciples of the Garden, the Stoa, or the Academy. Sylla too, though barbarian enough to cut down the groves of the Academy, amid the plunder of Athens, brought home the writings of Aristoteles, which had so long been lost to the world; and finally, Greek philosophy found a voice in that most lucid of all writers, Cicero; who undertook to give his countrymen a kind of epitome of the doctrines of the different sects. Enough remains to us of these beautiful works to make the loss of any part of them most grievous. They are, or might be, in the hands of all, it is, therefore, needless to notice them farther here.

Cicero was nearly the last of that race of great men whom St. Paul so eloquently praises, "who having not the law, were a law unto themselves." He was too good for his contemporaries, and was sacrificed to the profligacy of the times. The last preacher of righteousness had now left the stage, and A MIGHTIER VOICE,—though

* See Plutarch in Catone majore.

still and small, like that which followed the storm and the earthquake that shook Horeb to its foundations,—proclaimed the tidings of immortality to mankind, and confirmed the hopes which so many of the wise and good had cherished as their dearest treasure, during a long period of suffering. Philosophy had done its work;—men longed for THE TRUTH, and it was bestowed; noble Athenians were among the first converts to Christianity; Platonic philosophers among its most fearless martyrs; so truly had old Socrates fulfilled his mission, and taught men to contemn honours, wealth, or life, if they were to be bought by the sacrifice of principle. It is pleasant to see the affectionate remembrance with which these philosophic converts recur to the lessons of their early instructors, and we may draw thence a sure proof that the early Academy had faithfully executed its great charge, and become a true “schoolmaster to bring men to Christ.”

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